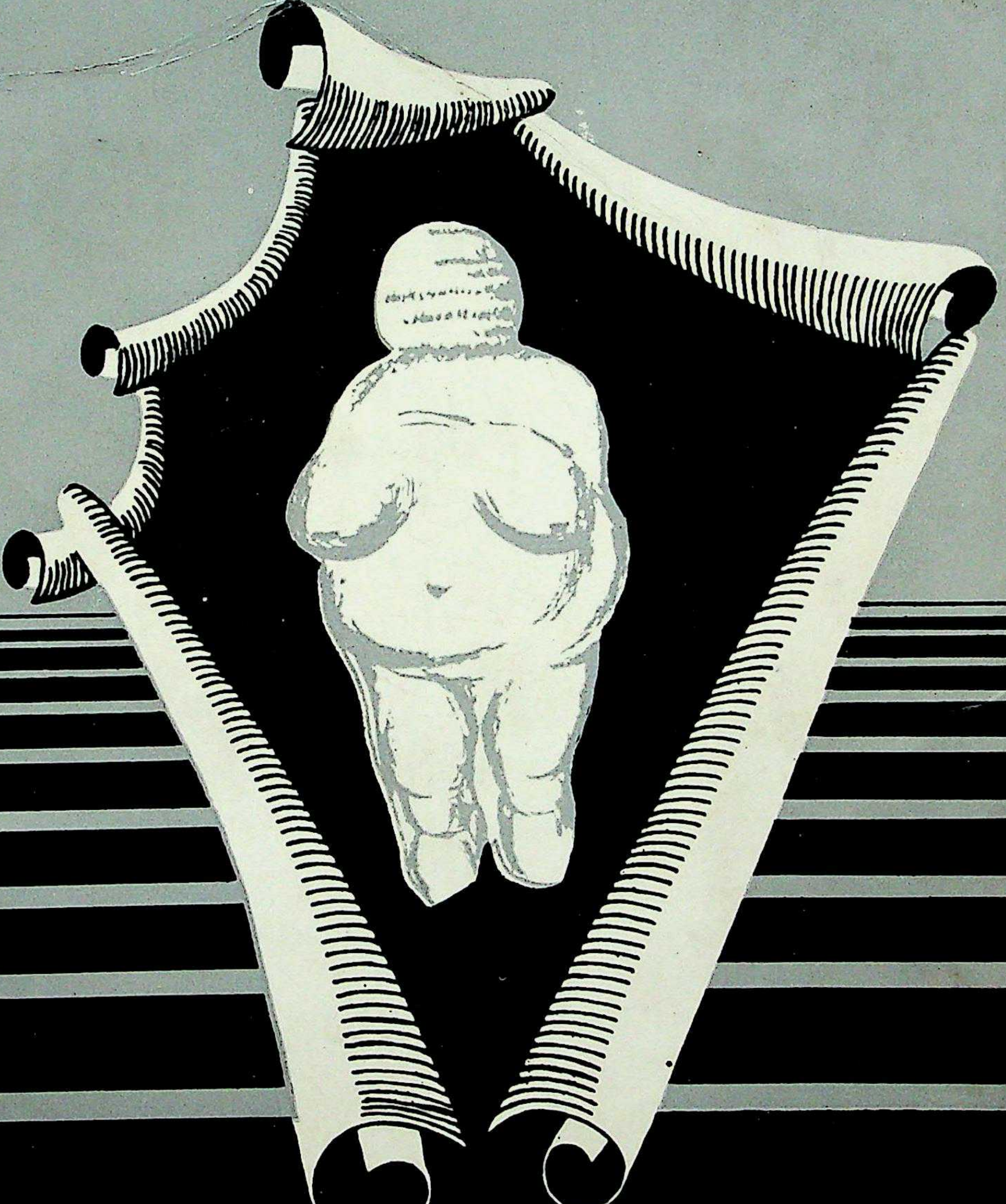
MOTHERGODDESS
IN INDIAN ART, ARCHÆOLOGY & LITERATURE



M.C.P. Srivastava

MOTHER GODDESS
IN INDIAN ART, ARCHAEOLOGY & LITERATURE

MOTHER GODDESS

IN INDIAN ART ARCHAEOLOGY & LITERATURE

M.C.P. SRIVASTAVA

AGAM KALA PRAKASHAN
DELHI

State Museum Library
Lucknow

First Published 1979
© Dr Mahesh Chandra Prasad Srivastava (b. 1934)

4912

Published by Agam Prasad, M.A., Research Scholar,
for AGAM KALA PRAKASHAN, 1736 Tri Nagar,
Delhi-110035, Phone-563395
Printed by PRINT INDIA, A-38/2, Maya Puri Industrial Area, Phase-I,
New Delhi-110064.

Dedicated
to
my eldest brother
Shri Shyam Chandra Prasad Srivastava

State Museum Library
Lucknow

FOREWORD

Man from the very beginning of his evolution has been wonder struck at the mystery of creation. Seeing the mother as the concrete creator, he has bestowed both respect and awe for the female principle. It is no surprise then that when man began to entertain even rudiments of religion, statues of Mother Goddess—crudely carved stone Venuses of the Upper Palaeolithic times—were his first religious symbols in anthropomorphic form. Since then the worship of Mother Goddess has become universal in all communities down the ages. India was no exception, and a miniature terracotta figure of a Mother Goddess found at Oriup in Bhagalpur district in Bihar may be one of the earliest such figures of Mother Goddess belonging to neolithic-chalcolithic period in Eastern India. In the Harappa culture also, the worship of the Mother Goddess was very prominent and in the Vedic pantheon female goddesses are quite numerous and important. Dr. Shrivastava in his book has tried to trace the history of the cult from both archaeological and literary sources. It is a difficult task in view of the enormity of the sources and the variety of the ideas pertaining to the cult through the passage of time. Dr. Shrivastava showing the quality of *nīra-ks-ira-vivechana* has largely succeeded in unravelling the tangled webs and in presenting a readable account.

B.P. Sinha

Patna
20th September 1978

PREFACE

The present work, "Mother Goddess in Ancient Indian Art and Literature", embodies in the main my Ph.D. Thesis approved by the Patna University. In this work, a sincere effort has been made to present a complete historical survey of the development of Mother Goddess worship in Ancient India. And, in doing so both the literary and the archaeological sources have, as far as practicable, been thoroughly utilized.

In the preparation of this work I have benefited much by many scholarly works. It would, therefore, be unfair not to record my deep sense of gratitute to the scholars whose works I have thoroughly utilized. I would be failing in my duty if I do not record my profound regards and indebtedness to my reverend Gurudeva, Dr. B.P. Sinha, M.A., Ph.D. (Lond), University Professor & Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History & Archaeology, Patna University, Patna, under whose scholarly shade this work was prepared. As a supervisor, we was always ready to discuss problems connected with my research work. I am ever grateful to him for this and the encouragement, besides, valuable guidance I received from him. I am further grateful to him for the favour shown to me by contributing a 'Forword' to this work of mine. I am very much thankful to my colleagues, Dr. B. Sahai, M.A., Ph.D., Reader and Dr. S.N. Sahay, M.A., Ph.D., Lecturer for their valuable suggestions which I received from them while preparing the final manuscript for the press. My thanks are also due to Dr. (Smt.) S.M. Devi, M.A., Ph.D., Lecturer in the Department from whom I always received encouragement and valuable suggestions. To my friend Sri L.A. Narain, Deputy keeper, Pre-History Section, National Museum, New Delhi, I am very much grateful as he shoulders the entire responsibility of looking after the publication of this work while going through the press. This has saved much of time and labour. My thanks are also due to Sri P.N. Sahay, M.A., who was Librarian in the Department (now Librarian in the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi) for the facilities he provided in the Departmental Library and to Sri P.K. Bose, Photographer who helped me in the preparation of the plates.

To my alma mater I am very much grateful for the financial assistance which I received from it during the period of research.

In the end my thanks are also due to Sri Agam Prasad, Proprietor, Messrs. Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi, for the keen interest he took in the preparation of this work in a very short span of time.

Patna
21st September, 1978.

Mahesh Chandra Prasad Shrivastava

LIST OF PLATES

1. Venus of Wittendrof, Lime stone, Austria, Palaeolithic Period.
2. Venus of Menton, Austria, Palaeolithic Period.
3. Venus of Lespughe, France, Palaeolithic Period.
4. Mother and child, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
5. Pregnant Woman, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
6. Earth Goddess, Kulli.
7. Earth goddess, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
8. Mother holding baby and left breast, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
9. Mother goddess, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
10. Tree Goddess between the branches of the tree, Indus valley seal, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
11. Three Bovine female figure, Indus valley, Harappa, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
12. Naked Goddess, Navadatoli.
13. Girls in dancing posture, Nandatoli.
14. Mother goddess on gold plaque, Lauriya Nandangarh.
15. Astarte gold plaque, sejna, *c.* 13th century B.C.
16. Serpent Goddess, Bulandibagh, *c.* 3rd Century B.C.
17. Laxmi, coins of Maues.
18. Laxmi, Terracotta plaque, Kausambi.
19. Dipa Laxmi, Indus valley, Mohanjodaro, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
20. Saraswati, Bharhut, *c.* 2nd Century B.C.
21. Kalyanasundra, Rastrakutaj, Ellora, *c.* 8th Century A.D.
22. Uma Maheswara, Pala, Bihar, *c.* 10th Century A.D.
23. Ardhanariswara, Dasasuram, Chole, *c.* 12th Century A.D.
24. Buffalo being killed by a spear, Indus valley seal, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
25. Buffalo attacking a number of people, Mohenjodaro seal, Indus valley people *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.
26. Laxmi on the coins of Samudra Gupta.
27. Brahmani, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.
28. Maheswari, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.
29. Kaumari, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.
30. Vaisnavi, Eastern Ganga, Khiching, *c.* 13th Century A.D.
31. Varahi, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.

32. Indrani, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.
33. Chamundi, Eastern Ganga, Jaipur, *c.* 12th Century A.D.
34. Naga, Sirisvara temple, *c.* 8th-9th Century A.D.
35. Naga.
36. Hariti, Pala, *c.* 11th-12th Century A.D.
37. Manasa.
38. Manasa, A terracotta.
39. Ganga, Gupta, Besa Nagar, *c.* 6th Century A.D.
40. Jyestha, Pallava, *c.* 8th-9th Century A.D.
41. Ganga, Rajshahi, Pala, *c.* 11th-12th Century A.D.
42. Mahisamardini, Early Western, Chalukya, Aihole, *c.* 6th-7th Century A.D.
43. Narsimhi, Satna, *c.* 10th Century A.D.
44. Saraswati, Pala, Asutosh Museum, *c.* 11th Century A.D.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*
ABORI	*Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
AG	*The Ancient Gods*
AIOC	*Proceedings and Transactions of All India Oriental Conference*
Ap.Dh.Su.	*Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra*
Ap.Sr.Su.	*Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra*
Arch.	Archaeology
ASI-AR	*Archaeological Survey of India—Annual Reports*
ASIR	*Archaeological Survey of India Reports—Cunningham*
AV	*Atharvaveda*
Baudh. Dh. Su.	*Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra*
BMC	*The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum, London.*
BMC, GD	*Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Sasanka King of Gauda* (in the British Museum, London)
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CGC, BH	*Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*
CHI	*Cambridge History of India*
CII	*Corpus Inscriptimum Indicarum*
CR	*Calcutta Review*
DHI	*Development of Hindu Iconography*
EH	*Excavations at Harappa*
EHI	*Elements of Hindu Iconography*
EI	Epigraphia Indica
EM	*Epic Mythology*
ERE	*Encyclopedia of Religion & Ethics*
FEM	*Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro*
fem.	feminine
G.O.S.	Government Oriental Series
Gobhila G.S.	*Gobhila Gṛihya Sūtra*
HBR	*History of Bengal, Vol. I*
HJAS	*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies.*
HM	*Hindu Mythology*
HOS	*Harvard Oriental Series*
IA	*Indian Antiquary*

IAR	*Indian Archaeology—Review*
IC	*Indian Culture*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
Ind. Studien	*Indische Studien*
IM	*Indian Museum*
JASB	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JBORS	*Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society*
JBRS	*Journal of the Bihar Research Society*
JIH	*Journal of the Indian History*
JISOA	*Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*
JRAI	*Journal of the Royal Anthropoliogical Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London*
JRASB	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*
JUPHS	*Journal of the Uttar Pradesh Historical Society*
Manu	*Manusmṛiti*
MASI	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*
Mbh.	*Mahābhārata*
MIC	*Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*
Mt.	Mountain
Nigh	*Nighaṇṭuka*
Nir	*Nirukta*
OEISC	*Origin and Evolution of the India Clay Sculpture*
OST	*Original* Sanskrit Texts
P.	Pravāsī
p/pp	*Page/pages*
pl/pls.	*plate/plates*
PMC	*Catalogue of coins in the Punjab Museum, Lahore,* Vol. I
P	*Purāṇa* (Journal)
QJMS	*Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*
Raghu.	*Raghuvaṁśam*
R.V., RV	*Ṛigveda*
SB	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*
SBE	*Sacred Books of the East*
SAESHI	*Some Aspects of the Earliest History of India* by Dr. S.C. Sirkar
TA, Taitt. Ar.	*Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*
TB, Taitt. Br.	*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*
Taitt. Up.	*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*
Vasistha Dh.Su.	*Vaśiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra*
VM	*Vedic Mythology*
VS, Vaj, Sam	*Vājasneyī Saṁhitā*

CONTENTS

Pages

Foreword vii

Preface ix

List of Plates xi

Abbreviations xiii

Chapter 1—Introduction 1

Chapter 2—Mother-Goddess in the Pre- and Proto-Historic Period 13

Chapter 3—Mother Goddess in the Vedic Period 32

Chapter 4—Mother Goddess in the Post-Indus and Pre-Mauryan Period 63

Chapter 5—Mother Goddess in the Maurya-Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa Period 70

Chapter 6—Mother Goddess in the Gupta and post-Gupta Period 90

Chapter 7—Mother Goddess in Hindu and Buddhist Tantras 156

Chapter 8—Folk-Goddesses 166

Chapter 9—Śākta Pīṭhas 178

Chapter 10—Rituals and Festivals 184

Chapter 11—Resume 197

Bibliography 205

Index 219

Plates

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of the divine Mother has a hoary past. Mother has always been held as an object of adoration by the Indians. Indian culture, therefore, preserves a tradition of Mother worship. Her status in society is not inferior to Father, rather in many ways she is considered superior.[1] Not only Mother but womanhood, in general, commands respect in Indian Society; and Motherhood, in particular, is held in very high esteem. In India Mother is installed on a highest pedestal of reverence by her children presupposing a glorious tradition of Mother worship. As a result Śāktism became a very important sect of Hindu religion and continues to be so. Followers of this religion conceive Great Goddess as the personification of primordial energy and the source of all divine and cosmic evolution. We do not find such a completely female oriented system in the religious history of the world except India. Śaktism, which was fully established as a powerful religious sect, was definitely 'a direct offshoot of the primitive Mother Goddess cult which was so prominent a feature of the religion of the agricultural peoples who based their social system on the principle of mother-right'.[2] Although we do not have any positive evidence to show this fact, yet we may infer the circumstances leading to the emergence of the Mother Goddess cult.

Generally speaking, paternity is a presumption and maternity a reality.[3] Child after birth knows none except mother on whom it is totally dependent; father is only introduced at a later stage. Mother is, therefore, everything to a child. This privilege of Mother is eternal. Many thinkers presume an age of promiscuity in the beginning of human civilization[4]. In such an age the question of father right did not arise. Groups were definitely controlled by females who produced child and freely mated with males for the purpose, which later on led to another development in sociological set-up. Matriarchy became the order of the day. It is generally agreed that Matriarchy preceded Patriarchy. Therefore, there was priority of mother-right in primitive society.[1] N.N. Bhattacharya rightly observes: "In primitive society, the clan centered in the women on whose responsibility rested the essentially important function of rearing up the young and of imparting to them whatever could be characterised as the human heritage at the pre-hunting state. All cultural traits including habits, norms of behaviours, inherited traditions, etc., were formed by and transmitted through females. The woman was not only the symbol of generation, but the actual producer of life. Her organs and attributes were thought to be endowed with generative power, and so they had been the life giving symbols. In the earliest phases of social evolution, it was this maternity that held the field, the life producing mother being the central figure of religion"[2]

---

[1] नास्ति मातृसमा छाया नास्ति मातृसमा गतिः ।
नास्ति मातृसमं त्राणं नास्ति मातृसमा प्रिया ।।
Mahabharata, xii. 266.31.

[2] Bhattacharya, N.N., *History of the Śākta Religion*. Delhi, 1974, p. 2.

[3] "Paternity is a matter of inference as opposed to maternity which is a matter of observation", Maine, Sir Henry, *Dessertation on Early Law and Custom*, London 1833, p. 202.

[4] Westermark opposes the view that in the beginning human race lived in the state of promiscuity. For full discussion see E. Westermark. *The History of Human Marriage*, Vol. I, Ch. III, where different views are quoted with full authorities. In India the state of promiscuity is found among the Uttarkurus and other parts; Mbh. I, 113, 7-20; II, 28.23-24.

In India we still have traces of matriarchal families. Matriarchy of the primitive age gave way to patriarchy. In the beginning, food-collection and food-production was the duty of women or her invention.[3] So the cultivation of food and its gathering also were the special occupation of women as hunting was of men in the primitive division of labour.[4] Thus the superiority of Mother was leading to her exaltation in social status almost to deification. But with the establishment of husbandary and domestication of flocks and herds, the importance of males was also recognised.[5] In the field of religion also the virgin, Mother of the primitive belief was given a male partner, either as husband or son but definitely in a subordinate position.[6] Thus father-right elements began to be imposed upon the social structure step by step with subsequent changes in the mode of food-gathering and food production. It might also be possible that the self-defence of the primitive age began to suffer due to increase in population or scarcity of food in a particular region leading to expansion and migration of people resulting in a search for new lands began. This led to inter-group clashes and regular wars which brought man into an advantageous position due to his physical superiority. A similar condition might be thought of in India, as for instance the period of Aryan expansion for a long time. In such wars males played dominating role though women must have received as booty. Naturally, father-right got preference over mother right without in any affecting the divinity and reverence towards Mother.

---

[1] James, E.O.: *The Cult of the Mother-Goddess*, London 1959, p. 229. Ehrenfels has taken Renukā as a symbol of old Matriarchal Society whereas Jamadāgnī symbolises Patriarchal society and the killing of his mother by Parasurāma to be a story dealing with the struggle between these two set-ups of society, !Ehrenfels, *The Mother-right in India*, p. 137. Plato and Aristotle thought family was patriarchal in structure. Rousseau, Herder and Comte were of the same opinion. It was Bachofen who first in his *summum bonum* '*Das Mutterecht*' stressed that mother-right was the older institution, if Fuchs, Stephen: *The Origin of Man and His Culture*.

[2] Bhattacharya, N.N. : *op. cit.*, p. 2—The plentiful discovery of palaeolithic female figurines in bone, ivory and stone with the maternal organs grossly exaggerated proves his contention.

[3] Bernel, J.D., *Science in History*, p. 60-61.

[4] Briffault, R., *The Mothers*, Vol. III, p. 2.

[5] James, E.O., *op. cit.*, p. 228.

[6] *Ibid*, p. 228.

Baron Omar Rolf Ehrenfels[1] who has collected all data on matriarchy and organised them in a theoretical set-up observes that mother-right elements in India are stronger, both in extent and in degree, than in any part of the world and that, in spite of the ruthless efforts to establish male superiority through hypergamy, child-marriage and *sati* (burning of widows in the funeral pyres of their husbands), mother-right elements could not be stamped out from the lives of the masses. The resistence which the mother-right against father-right is evident from the above mentioned measure taken to establish male superiority. Such an effort is hardly noticed in human history anywhere. In the pre-vedic age, therefore, mother-right was on a firm footing which necessitated the Aryans to break the resistance of mother-right. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya[2] has treated this problem strictly from economic point of view. He holds that the initial stage of agricultural economy created the matriarchal conditions for the social supremacy of the female. In India, mother-right was historically connected with the early agricultural economy, which was probably violently suppressed in subsequent days. While the economy of pre-vedic people was mainly agricultural the Vedic people were predominantly pastoral. Hence we note in the religio-philosophical thought of the postev-dic period two main currents—the Vedic and the non-Vedic.

In the genesis of Mother worship psychological element must have played a significant part. Psychologically mother 'is more easily propitiated by prayer, flattery, and offerings, more ready to defend from evil, more irritable, uncertain and wayward in her temper and moods, more dangerously spiteful and prone to inflict diseases, if offended by neglect.'[3] These qualities of mother are sure to inspire awe into and command reverence from her children. But there is another aspect also. Ramkrishna aptly remarks that, "Because the child is more free with its mother and consequently she is dearer to the child than anyone else".[4] So, there is a special bond between mother and her child. Her adoration is, therefore, natural and eternal.

---

1. Ehrenfels, *The Mother-right in India*, p. 121-29 and 201-24.
2. Chattopadhyaya, D.P., *Lokayata*, p. 132ff.
3. Monier-Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 222-23.
4. 'Life and Sayings' no. 89 as quoted in *The Śāktas* by Payne, p. 128.

We have ample evidence to show that India witnessed Mother Goddess worship from pre-historic times, though such evidence in the stone Age is sadly lacking. But a large number of female figures discovered from Indus Valley Sites are, according to scholars, connected with the Mother-Goddess cult. Unfortunately, the Indus script which could throw more light on this issue, has not yet been convincingly deciphered. The ancient literature of India definitely took Motherhood in a very high esteem. It is remarked by scholars that the postion of women in a particular society gives a true picture of its civilisation.[1] Manu also says that where women are honoured, there gods are pleased, where they are not honoured, all work become fruitless.[2]

In the *Tantras* and *Sāṅkhya*, the female principle or *Prakṛiti* is viewed as the fundamental reality, the cause of the universe. In the *Sāṅkhya Kārika* of Īśvara-kṛiṣṇa, *Prakṛiti* has been given superior position over *Brahma*-the Puruṣa. The existence of *Prakṛiti*, the female, is felt whereas the role played by *Puruṣa*, the male is imagined. But the presence of one presupposes the presence of the other since both are essential for creation. In the *Sāṅkhya* later on *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti* both were considered part and parcel of one and the same.[3] Even god is regarded a half-man and half-woman (*ardhanārīśvara*). Not only this, every God has His own Śakti, the feminine energy, without which he becomes ineffective and lifeless. And these Śaktis are just the feminine prototypes of their respective lords.

Males and females in India are considered complementary. They constitute 'ordinarily a fundamental unity'. The institution of marriage is regarded obligatory here. Men and women are required to be together in all the spheres of life according to the marriage ritual. Marriage in India is a complete union of male and female : sexual, mental and spiritual. The wife is designated *ardhāṅginī*-half of the body. This means husband and wife combined together to make one complete unit for all purposes. The Vedic ritualistic *Karmakāṇḍas* could not be performed alone. "The bisexuality of the human race conditions a division of labour. There are certain functions which man cannot undertake. This specialisation does not rob women of their femininity; nor does it spoil the natural relationship of men and women. Man is the creator and woman the lover Her special qualities are grace and tenderness, peace and affection, surrender and sacrifice. Brutality, violence, anger, hatred are not her typical features. Masculine dominance is not natural."[4] It is only circumstantial.

---

[1] James, E.O., *The Cult of the Mother-Goddess*, p.228.

[2] *Manu*, III. 56. Hence it can be said that in India there was a highly civilized society.

[3] A tree is born out of a seed and bears fruits but we simply feel the presence of the tree and its fruit bearing capacity. But the part played by the seed becomes the matter of imagination. Similarly a child is born from the womb of the mother is a fact whereas the child developed from the sperm of the father's semen remains a matter of imagination and presumption.

[4] Radhakrishnan, S., *Religion Society*, p. 139-40.

In the primitive Indian society there might have been female dominance. In Zulu dictionary man is defined as an animal trained by woman.[1] In the Vedic period it appears from the vedic ritual, as Mr. Chowdhari observes, 'the position of mother is unique. She is the highest guru and the rites, performed by her and for her, lead to the same conclusion. She is to be respected by her children a thousand times more than the father.[2] In this period the institution of marriage was fully established. In the hymn concerning the marriage of Sūryā,[3] she is addressed by her friends and relatives to make her husband's home as her own. According to R.C. Majumdar, this hymn suggests that the Indian home is expected to be 'a happy home where husband and wife, faithful to each other, pass their lives in peace and prosperity, and spend the well-earned rest in old age amid sons and grandsons'.[4]

In the Vedic period women were entitled to almost all privileges enjoyed by males. They could become renowned scholars. Vedic learning was pursued by women also. Even vedic hymns were composed by women like Lopāmudrā, Apālā, Viśvavārā, Sikatā, Nivāvarī and Ghoṣā. Women could remain Brahmachāriṇī life long. But motherhood had its own appeal. Mother is very near to the child and she is called *Mātā*. A vedic devotee is seen not satisfied with the paternal conception of the God and considers Him as a mother.[5] In the *Atharvaveda* a son is warned to abide by the wishes of his mother.[6] In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, the *Āchārya* advises a Brahmachārī after completion of his education to worship mother as a god. (मातृ देवो भव).

In Sūtra literature also mother is held in great reverence. As the *Gautama Dharma Sūtra*[7] mentions : Among the Gurus Āchārya is the best but others think that mother is the best. Another Dharmasūtra while describing Glory (गौरव) says that the glory of an *Āchārya* is equivalent to that of ten *Upādhyāyas*, father's glory is equivalent to hundred *Āchāryas* while mother's more than thousand fathers.[8] According to the *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra* literarure mother is entitled

---

1. Radhakrishnan, S., *Religion and Society*, p. 139-40.
2. *IHQ*, 1938, p. 822.
3. *RV*, X, 85.
4. Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *Great Women of India*, p. 4.
5. *RV*, VIII, 98.11;
   'त्वं हि न पिता वसो त्वं माता शतक्रतो बभूपित'
6. *AV*, III, 302;
   'माता भवतु सम्मना:'
7. II, 56.
8. *Vaśiṣṭha. Dh. Sū.*, XIII, 48;
   उपाध्यायाद्दशाचार्या:, आचार्याणां शतं पिता ।
   पितुर्दशशतं माता गौरवेणातिरिच्यते ।।

   Similar view is held by *Manusmriti* (II.145) and *Mahābhārata* (XIII, 105.14; XII, 108.17).

to service and maintenance from her son.[1] In the *Aśvalāyana Gṛihya Sūtra*,[2] Gārgī Vāchaknavī, Vāḍavā Prātitheyī, Sulabhā, Maitreyī are mentioned as great vedic teachers to whom at the time of *Brahmayajña* tribute had to be paid.

The *Epics* also appear to have held mother in high esteem. The *Mahābhārata* contains ample references to prove the exalted status of mother. She is taken to be the highest *guru* and no *guru* is equal to her.[3] The Pāṇḍavas were greatly devoted to their mother and obeyed all her orders; the most unusual and difficult imposition *viz.*, sharing a common wife, Draupadī, is an example of this. Even the arch villian Duryodhana listens more to his mother than to his father or any other kinsfolk.[4] The *Rāmāyaṇa* also yields similar examples. Rāma was devoted to his step-mother Kaikeyī also, who was the root cause of his blighted fortune.[5] In the *Mahābhārata*. Bhīṣma says that to worship father and mother and the *guru* is the best form of religion and such people are respected among people but those who are disrespectful to them go to spoil this world and the world hereafter. Further, it says that there is no cool shade, shelter, safe refuge and loving object in this world compared to the mother.[6]

In later literature also mother gets the same respect. The principal *Smṛiti* writers like Manu[7] and Yājñavalkya[8] have given mother a higher position than the *guru*. According to Atri (151) there is no *guru* better than mother.[9] Manu forbids quarrels with females like the daughter and sister under the threat of moral repression.[10] In Purāṇic and Tantra literature mother is elevated to the highest position. Mother is treated as *Ādyāśakti*. She is Jagadambā and Jagajjananī. The *Devīmahātmya* declares that all forms of knowledge are the aspects of goddess

---

1. *Āpastambha Dharma Sūtra*, I, 10.29.9; *Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra*, II, 2.48; *Vaśistha Dh. Sū.*, XIII, 47. According to Vaśiṣṭha father can be left but in no case mother could be deserted even she is an outcast. These *Sūtra* writers consider matricide as the highest crime. (*Ap. Dh. Su.* I, 28, 6-9; *Vaśiṣṭha Dh. Su.* XIII, 47; *Baudh, Dh. Su.* II, 3.42).
2. III, 4.4.
3. *Mbh.* XII, 108.18; माता परम को गुरुः, नास्ति मातृसमो गुरु I, 196.16—of all *gurus* the mother is the highest *guru*; XIII, 105.14; XII342.18; XII. 161.9.
4. Kapadia, *Hindukinship*, pp. 129-30.
5. Ibid.
6. *Mbh.*, XII, 226.31.
7. II, 145.
8. I, 35.
9. नास्ति मातुःपरो गुरुः ।
10. Manu, IV, 180, Kapadia, *Hindukinship*, p. 129; *Manu*, IX.27. The bringing forth of children and their nurture was considered by Manu to be the duties of wives, which shows the dependence of children upon mother and the importance of mother in the domestic set up.

Sarasvatī, goddess of learning and all women throughout the world are her forms.[1] According to the Puranas mother is always kind and affectionate to her son. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*,[2] gives the story of Yama raising his foot to strike his mother Sajñā for which act he is cursed by her (illusory Sajñā). He doubted the genuineness of her motherhood since a mother imprecating a curse on her son, relinquishing all affection, was never witnessed and it is further observed that even when son is unnatural she should not become so.

The great poet Kālidāsa takes motherhood to be the goal of womanhood.[3] The *Harṣacarita* also mentions the declaration of Yaśovatī the wife of Prabhākaravardhana at the time of mounting the funeral pyre : 'I am both of a brave mother, I am the wife of brave man and I have produced brave children.'[4] Śaṅkarācārya, though prohibited for a Sanyāsī, performed the funeral ceremony of his mother with his own hands and observed while paying tributes to his mother that, "My salutation is to her who bore the intolerable labour pain, the mother who having developed distaste for food let her body go thinner, and for a year who had the trouble to sleep on the bed dirty made by the excretion made by her child. Let she take my salutation who is unable to repay such debt."[5]

In this connection, the prevalence of the *Niyoga* custom in ancient India requires consideration. Levirate involved a complete deviation from the physical chastity of the wife. Through this practice children (particularly son) could be raised on wives in certain circumstances, *e.g.*, impotency of husband or his long absence or his suffering from some bad disease. In the *Samhitas* and the *Epics* we find many examples. Even the widow could have children through this practice. The *Dharmaśāstra* writers have approved of it. This really proves that Motherhood was more important in ancient Indian society than the physical chastity of women. The very purpose of womanhood was to create.

Motherhood was no doubt held in high esteem but in general women were held inferior to men. However, general position and status of women in the Vedic age was much higher than any other ancient society that we know of, those of Greece

---

1. XI, 6
2. LXXVII, 31-32.
3. Vedalankara Haridatta, *Hindū Parivāra Mimānsā* (Hindi), p. 207 ; *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*, IV, 18. Kaṇva tells Śakuntalā at the time of her departure that she would forget the pangs of separation by giving birth to a son. Similarly *Raghuvaṅsam*, III, 1-9 gives a beautiful description of motherhood.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
5. *Śaṅkara digvijaya*, XV, 29-55

   ....ग्रास्तां तावदियं प्रसूतिसमये दुर्वारशूलव्यथा, नैरूच्ये तनुशोषणं मलमयी शय्या च सांवत्सरी। एकस्यापि न गर्भभारभरणं क्लेशस्य यस्याः क्षमो दातुं निष्कृतिमुन्नतोऽपि तनयस्तस्य ग्रनन्यै नमः ।।

and Rome not excluded.[1] Though we have evidences to show that sons were preferred to daughters.[2] On the birth of sons joy was shown whereas on the birth of daughters some sort of discontent or dissatisfaction was shown.[3] 'In Vedas themselves one may read that women are false. There is nothing more sinful than woman. They are the root of all evils and, even when of noble birth are possessed of protectors, are always seeking to transgress the restraints laid upon them.'[4]

The *Mahābhārata*[5] and the *Manusmṛiti*[6] both held that sons and daughters are equal. Both hold motherhood in high esteem but on the other hand both consider women inferior to male, rather look down upon them. Kṛishṇa says that, 'women, gambling, hunting and drink are the four evils by which people are deprived of prosperity.'[7] He further says that, 'who knows what may happen if it is left to the maiden's choice.'[8] The very creation of women was for sinful disposition as a result of the protest made by the celestials so that men may not attain the godhood.[9] Manu holds women should always be protected and her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects in youth and her sons protects in old age since a woman is never fit for independence.[10] Manu appears to be very strict in his attitude towards women. He wanted complete dependence. But this dependence in no way disturbed the highest throne of reverence to which a mother is installed by her children. Physical unchastity on the part of mother was unbearable by Śvetaketu who is said to have stopped promiscuity according to the *Mahābhārata.* Since one cannot hear anything against one whom he loves or adores, it became thus unbearable to Śvetaketu to see his mother going immoral way. The dependence is, therefore, nothing but economical dependence and they were strictly guarded by males, though their reverence was never affected.

It is really interesting to note that on the one hand women in general were considered to be socially and politically inferior by our *Dharmaśāstra* writers but on the other hand mother in particular was considered most revered, even defied. Apparently it looks as if the defication of motherhood was a due compensation for the general deterioration in the status of women. Though we have no clear

---

1. Majumdar, R.C. (Ed.), *Great Women of India*, p. 5.
2. *AV*, III, 23 ; VI.II.
3. Majumdar, R.C., *op. cit.*, p. 5. There s a parallel though indirect reference in *Taittirīya Saṁhitā.*
4. Macfie, *Myths and Legends of India*, p. 292-93.
5. *Mbh.* XIII, 45.13.
6. *Manu.* IX, 130.
7. *Mbh.* III,13.7.
8. *Ibid.*, I, 221.23.
9. *Ibid.*, XIII, 19. 38-40.
10. *Manu.* IX.3.

cut evidence to show such a trend, yet we can infer on the basis of such varied views expressed by the same authority.

The degradation in the status of women was gradual. The *Atharvaveda Saṁhitā* prescribes a charm for changing female foetus into a male one. A daughter is taken to be a source of trouble by *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. Gautama Buddha also refused to admit women into his religious order, since their admittance was to bring down the life of the religion to half. So, the Hindu view, in the later periods, considered women to be wicked and sensuous by nature. And men were required to act as a check over them. Similar view was held by Confucius, Aristotle, Milton and even Rousseau.[1]

No doubt, in the early Vedic period the position of women was satisfactory. They had similar status as man. The Āryans were at this time engaged in the arduous task of political expansion. Women in Vedic India, as in Homeric Greece, were actively co-operating with men in their work of manufacturing bows, arrows and cloth and participating in agriculture. As free labour was not available they were wealth producing members of the society. But in Brāhmaṇic-Upaniṣadic Age (c. 1000-500 B.C.) political expansion of the Āryans was complete in northern India. This led to the subjugation of old inhabitants (*Dasyu-Dāsa*) which made abundant availability of manual labour. This perhaps was the reason for the general deterioration in the status of women during this period since they became economically less productive members of the society.[2] Further deterioration is witnessed in the Epic-Purāṇic period (c. 500 B.C. to A.D. 600) when early marriage was prescribed for girls. *Upanayana* became a formal *saṁskāra* for girls and vedic learning was prohibited for them. Varāhamihira in the *Bṛihatsaṁhitā*, no doubt considers women superior to men but the *Smṛitis* in general are opposed to it. Though these all give a gloomy picture of the status of women, the Smṛitis admittedly recognise the high position of respect and reverence enjoyed by mother. The Epics, the *Dharmasūtras* and the *Smṛitis* all eulogize the glory of mother.

Aryan society, from the very beginning, has been patriarchal in set up. Though in India from a very long time mother is subordinate to father in position, her reverence is not inferior. It is quite possible that father and mother having important definitive functions in the joint family set up led to the idea of Mother worship. 'If the father was regarded with awe as the primary source of life. the mother was an object of devotion to the children of the family as the more evident author of their existence. And again, if the father was venerated as the good supplier and protector (*Pitā*), the mother was beloved as mater out (*Mātā*) of daily nourishment—the arranger of household measuring and ordering its affairs as the moon (also called *mātā* measured time).'[3]

---

1. Majumdar, R.C., *op. cit.*, p. 22-23.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 29-30.
3. Monier-Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 223.

Mother worship, therefore, has a long tradition in India, and we have seen that mother was installed on the highest throne of reverence. Right from the Vedas down to the present day the worship of Mother Goddess occupies an important place in our religion. In the Vedas we come across a number of goddesses, and many of them, in the long march to the present day, are thrown into oblivion; while many new have found their way into our pantheon. This is something quite extraordinary. And it required special study, which is no doubt difficult due to the nature of the sources available for the purpose.

Hindu *dharma* in external appearance seems to be most rigid in its nature, but it in reality is most flexible from within. It has shown queer tendency in borrowing, accomodating and adjustment, thanks to the many political vicissitudes of this country. Constant inroads by foreigners was a regular feature of Indian history and always posed a problem for the Hindu or Indian religious thinkers. History is the witness of such inroads but at the same time it is silent about the fate of those who came here from outside. Āryans who are now the inhabitants of India, were themselves intruders. *Ṛigveda* provides indubitable reference, to the original inhabitants of India (*Dasyu*, *Anārya* or *Śiśṇa devāḥ*). Following the Āryans came Persians, Yavanas. Śakas, Pahlavas, Kuṣāṇas and the Hūṇas; all of them settled here. Yet they did not have any separate cultural entity. The original inhabitants too were Āryanised (*Kṛivantāḥ Viśva āryaṁ*). Circumstantial evidences are in favour of their being absorbed into the religious, and social frame work of the Āryans. And in this process of absorption, the original belief of the Āryans underwent considerable changes. This factor may account for the introduction of new goddesses and new beliefs about the old ones. Many scholars[1] think that the disappearance of many Vedic goddesses was due to a process of metamorphosis occuring in the religious belief of the Āryans. At the same time gradual absorptions of pre-Āryan elements in Āryan fold, is also held responsible for the changes.[2] These observations can not be substantiated for in the vast extent of Indian literature, religious or otherwise has undergone constant interpolations through the ages and to date with any definiteness any particular section or the work at its entirity is encumbered with hurdles. Yet on the basis of coins, seals, terracotta figurines and epigraphs some sort of convincing and workable chronological framework could be built up.

---

1. Mention of such views have been made at appropriate places.
2. See A.K. Sur's article 'Pre-Aryan Elements in Indian culture' (*IHQ*, XX, 1934; Calcutta Review, Nov-Dec. 1932). The Naga problem is one of them. The Nāgas, were a powerful race of primitive people, probably of Mongolian origin, who inhabited India when the Aryans entered and began to spread. The hatred and contempt with which the Āryans regarded the Nagas are evident throughout the *Mahābhārata*. Some scholars even go to the extent to hold that the main theme of the *Mahābhārata* is the clash between the Āryans and the powerful Nāga race.

Therefore, the study of the 'The history of the worship of Mother Goddess in Ancient India' is primarily based on the evidence of Art and Archaeology as far as practicable. Although main stress is the archaeological materials, the importance of literary sources towards the goal has not been minimized or dispensed with. For the study of the entire Vedic period no archaeological material is available and therefore, whole of Vedic literature has been utilized in tracing the evolution during the Ṛigveda and post-vedic period. In the following period literary evidences outweigh archaeological. The *Sūtras* and the *Jātakas* alongwith the archaeological materials of the period do bring forward an idea of the Mother-Goddess but unfortunately a relationship between the evidences afforded by these two different sources could not be established; an attempt towards such an endeavour would have been quite arbitrary. This study is to trace the evolution of the goddess and the material of study is dealt in a chronological sequence. Chapter Two is devoted to the study of pre- and proto-historic period in three sections.The first deals with the position of the worship of Mother Goddess in the prehistoric period, followed by the next dealing with the position of Mother Goddess worship in contemporary Western Civilizations with an attempt to trace the origin also in brief. The third *section* is devoted entirely to the Indus Valley finds from whence Mother Goddess worship in India appears. Chapter Three has been exclusively devoted to the vedic and later vedic periods; and here each and every important goddess is considered separately. Vedas are the first literary source and this period is the basis on the background of which we can trace further development. Chapter Four deals with post-Indus and pre-Mauryan period. The justification for such a chapter has been discussed in the beginning of the chapter. However, to mention some, terracotta figurines of pre-Mauryan date, gold plaque from Lauriya Nandan Garh, *Jātaka* literature *Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī* and the *Sūtra* literature justify the introduction of this chapter. The entire later Vedic literature, the Brāhmaṇa, Upaniṣad and the like, has been excluded since they belong to the family of Vedas itself and have been tackled in *Chapter Three*. This may appear arbitrary but there is justification for such a decision. The *Jātakas* reflect the common beliefs, *Aṣṭādhyāyī* does not bother for the Vedic examples and must have tried to quote from the common examples (though we have very meagre material from this source). And *Sūtras* mainly attempt to formulate rules for the social, economic and religious practices. The prescription for many sacrifices must have a long history of their own. The *Sūtras* did not intend to invent any such practice or belief rather they formulated the prevalent common beliefs.[1] Chapter Five deals with the Maurya-Kuṣāṇā period (*i.e.* 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. approximately). The time range is rather long and has to be a justifiably so far only during this period we note the origin of the representations of many cult-images, which developed fully only during early Gupta period. And during this long period we do not find any particular development of the cult-image; simply they are found on coins, sculptures and in terracotta. However, to some extent Mauryan finds have been discussed in the beginning and Śuṅga and Kuṣāṇa materials together. One thing may be pointed out here that some foreign elements also played part in the evolution of a particular Mother Goddess Cult.[1] As a rule the Epic sources[2] should have been studied under this chapter. But we have noticed similarity in approach between the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* towards the religious beliefs. Moreover, the vast extent of the Epic literature shows a considerable interpolations. It is difficult to fix the date of each and every statement made in the *Epics* and then to arrive at some conclusion. Therefore, *Epics* and Purāṇas are studied together in Chapter Six. This Chapter deals with the period after 300 A.D. to 1000 A.D. Again the chronological range is long but we have noted that nothing new is left to show the evolution after 600 A.D. This date almost marks the maturity of the Mother Goddess Cult.[3] Here in this Chapter literary sources (*Epics and Purāṇas* including) together with the vast extent of sculpture are taken into account. And we have studied each and every important goddess under different sections, while in the beginning of the chapter the idea of Mother Goddess contained in these sources is discussed. Chapter Seven deals with the *Tantric* conception of the feminine and its representations. There is no doubt, that the Mother Goddess worship reached its culmination in the Gupta period as preserved in the *Devī-Mahātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, yet it was the *Tāntric* form of religion which in practice and theory both gave highest priority to the Mother Goddess (Śakti). *Tāntric* conception of the feminine is the latest phase of the Mother-Goddess cult. *Tāntric* literature may be said to have begun from 6th century A.D. Chapter Eight deals with some important Folk-Goddesses. The Folk-Goddesses had always remained an important aspect of the religious belief of the masses. In Chapter Nine a short discussion of the *Śākta Pīthas* has been provided. Chapter Ten deals with some significant rituals and festivals without which the study would not have been complete. In the end under a brief resume of the study has also been provided.

---

[1] And on this basis we have identified one Indus Valley sealing. See *P.U. Journal*, Vol. XX, No. 1, Jan. 1965, pp. 182ff.

---

1. Puri, B.N., 'Nana', the Mother Goddess in India and Western Asia, *Indian Culture*, Vol. III, pp. 225ff.
2. We have discussed this issue in the beginning of Chapter Six.
3. We find the culmination of the cult in the Great Mother Goddess Durgā (as outlined in the *Devī Mahātmya* Section of *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*).

CHAPTER 2

MOTHER GODDESS IN THE PRE- AND PROTO-HISTORIC PERIODS

PREHISTORIC PERIOD

Primitive religion is a most complicated problem. The origin of religion reconstructed through the relics of ancient men *viz.*, graves of the dead, sanctuaries and temples, cult objects, sculptures, bas-reliefs, engravings and paintings which have survived the ravages of time.[1] Hegel assumes that an age of magic preceded an age of religion. Frazer also holds similar view. Whereas James thinks that 'one can not have been the predecessor and root of the other' as the 'distinction between magic and religion is not chronological' and both these approaches to the supernatural always co-existed.[2] Hence, in his opinion primitive religion may be taken to be an 'effective desire' of the primitive men 'to be in right relation with a sacred transcendental order controlling human destinies and natural events which finds expression in a prescribed system of ritual and belief'.[3] The primitive mind like our own must have been very inquisitive. And, naturally, from the very beginning of human civilization people tried to explain things which they saw around them. Thus a suitable explanation to the mysteries of nature, things which they perceived but dimly understood was warranted. This led to the origin of myths. "Myths are products of beliefs, and beliefs are products of experiences'.[4] Magic and Religion are quite separate in nature. While magic implies power of man, religion hints at their helplessness. Through magic people try to affect the supernatural for their own ends, and religion is the outcome of their awe and reverence towards the supernatural.[5] Helplessness of men compels them to believe in the omnipotence of the supernatural. This belief almost amounts to blind faith and this is the root of religion. Religion believes in the supernatural power, mythology explains it and magic affects it for some selfish ends. In the beginning the mixture of all these three together led to the primitive abstract thought about the power of the supernatural and the ways and means control it, make it helpful to human beings and animals.

1. James, E.O., *History of religions*, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. James, E.O., *The Beginnings of Religion*, p. 30.
4. Mackenzie, D.A., *Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe*, p. XXIII.
5. Hawkes, Jaquetta and Wolley, Leonard, *History of Mankind*, Vol. I, p. 206-7.

To the primitive mind, women must have been object of special interest; so were the animals. Woman, because she was the source of sexual pleasure and animals because they were the source of their food. Early human beings were food gatherers and depended chiefly on hunting. Hence the earliest 'art' would be depicting these two objects—women and animals. Hence, in early art we find hunting scenes and female figurines—in paintings and sculptures. The female figure of the Early Stone Age is marked by the prominence of their pleasure spots. The Mount of Venus, the breasts and the buttocks, find primary attraction of the artist. If women were the first cultivators, men were the first artist.

There is no doubt that the men alone were first thinkers and conceived religions out of their intimate experience in society and environment. Birth, connected with women, naturally led to the identification of the principle of creation with the female principle and the 'creative force' was conceived as a woman—a Mother.

Stone Age

In India we do not find any evidence for this worship in the Stone Age but from many European sites Stone Age female figures have been discovered which support the prevalence of the Cult of the Mother Goddess in that age. These are called 'Venuses' and they require critical study. Erich Neumann observes that, "With the Stone Age sculptures of Great Mother as a goddess, the Archetypal Feminine suddenly bursts upon the world of men in overwhelming wholeness and perfection. Aside from the cave paintings, these figures of the Great Goddess are the earliest cult works and works of art known to us".[1] Some may argue that Palaeolithic hunters were entirely devoted to magic and their true religion came only with the adoption of farming. But so far the status of women with accentuated breasts and hips are concerned, they were perhaps used as objects of fertility cults and probably "they most likely represented the mother goddess, like the famous 'Venus of Willendrof' in Austria".[2] Later beliefs of the primitive men were influenced by the experiences of agriculture and naturally "their myths have been given agricultural significance".[3] It is also not unlikely that these Venuses represented the Mother—to be, and signified the worshipper's desire for an off-spring.

James, observes that the cults was "essentially a product of its environment at a critical juncture in the transition from hunting and food-gathering to agriculture and herding with antecedents going back into the Palaeolithic."[4] This is particularly apparent in the ritual and its symbolism centred in the various aspects of fecundity, which became a recurrent phenomenon and dominating influence throughout the

1. Neumann, E., *The Great Mother*, p. 94.
2. Fuchs, Stephen, *The Origin of Man and his culture*, p. 62.
3. Mackenzie, D.A., *Myths of Crete and Pre-Hallenic Europe*, p. XXIII; Plate I. 1A.
4. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 46.

region. It found expression in an exaggeration of the organs of maternity, in the conditions of pregnancy and occasionally of childbirth, the life-producing mother being the personification of fertility. "Around her a net work of emotions and sentiments collected which gave a sacred significance to the female principle and all its attributes, particularly those connected with birth and the food supply. Generation, in fact, was linked with the conservation of the means of subsistence as far back into the pre-historic past as the evidence takes us. Thus, while the Magdalenians at the end of the Palaeolithic concentrate upon the maintenance and control of the chase, their Aurignacian predecessors, now called Gravettians, were primarily interested apparently in the maternal aspect of birth".[1]

The Venuses of the Stone Age are definitely an interesting cult object whose significance is doubtful. The life-size female figures on the cave-wall at Angles—sur l' Anglin with their open vulva may' have been used for sexual rites'.[2] There are others also "expressive of the great basic idea of procreation, fertility, the continuance of life."[3] And they may well represent the cult of the Mother Goddess, which "are extraordinarily like the mother of Earth Goddesses of the agricultural peoples of Eurasia in the Neolithic Age and must be directly ancestral to them".[4] The chief characteristics of the Palaeolithic Venus is its sensuousness. The Venus of Lespunges is the best example. It is massive but full of grace. It perfectly expresses, "in her bowed head and the superb resignation of her poise, the faminine principle".[5]

We find a continuity between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultures. The Palaeolithic examples, even the Upper Palaeolithic ones, show 'sensuous response to the female body', whereas the Neolithic figurines have lost their this sensuousness.[6] The strongest bond between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic religions was their common desire for fertility. We have ample of evidence to support the prevalence of the worship of Mother Goddess cult in the Neolithic Age. Hundreds of clay, bone and stone effigies of the Mother Goddess have been found belonging to this age and are present even in the second pre-pottery Neolithic settlement at Jericho. Regarding two little female figurines, perfectly preserved except for her head, Kenyon observes that "the attitude is typical of the conventional Mother Goddess figurines found in connection with so many Near Eastern countries of later dates...they are strongly suggestive of a Mother Goddess or

---

1. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 46.
2. Hawkes and Woolly, *History of Mankind*, Vol. I, p. 213.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 213, Pl. 7.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 213-14.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

fertility cult, very natural for a community closely dependent on the productivity of the soil for their existence.'[1]

The Mother Goddess cult was also prevalent among the Megalithic people. Beautiful examples can be found with the conservative Malthese peasantry.[2] In their temples limestone carvings of the lady are found "with their magnificient obesity worthy of the venus of Willendrof."[3] A number of carvings over the megalithic and chalk-cut gallery tombs of northern France (mainly in the Seine, Oise and Marne departments) of the goddess shows her with an axe.[4] Axe cult has also been associated with the goddess probably with sexual import. It appears that Neolithic goddess directly descended from her Palaeolithic ancestress.[5] There is no doubt that funerary cult was popular with the megalithic people. So there was a continuity of Mother Goddess cult from the Palaeolithic to Megalithic phase.

Whether the primitive Mother Goddess continued to live in the deities of the historical pantheons is a separate question. It appears more probable that in the Palaeolithic hunting age there was nothing more than awe and curiosity about the mystery around women which gave rise to their deification. Whereas in the Neolithic age it took some definite shape. With the establishment of husbandry and cultivation the importance of Earth as creator was felt. And earth set an example to women and not the reverse as Plato remarks and naturally the "highest and most essential mysteries of the Feminine are symbolised by the earth and its transformation."[6] Earth and woman have similar nature since both create. In the beginning of human civilization there was no cultivation and human beings were quite ignorant of the part played by the seed in the vegetal growth. Similarly, they were ignorant about the part played by the male sperm in the birth of a child. And for creation only the Earth and the Women were considered to be solely responsible. It is only with the advancement of civilization and the knowledge of agriculture (cultivation of land, sowing of seed, etc.) made human beings to realise the importance of the coitus and the semenal discharge and seed and semen came to be equated. It is thus in the fitness of things that Earth set an example to Women.

In this age certain myths were formulated in this regard and a definite cult, most probably connected with fertility and fecundity evolved. And in the protohistoric period along with this fertility cult certain powerful Mother Goddess evolved which probably to a greater extent dominated ages to come. It is, however,

---

1. Kenyon, *Digging up Jericho*, p. 60. They are present in almost every cultural province between Sialk and Britain and from Persia to Badari.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 338.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 338. She is shown not only standing and sitting but also lying on her side on a couch, her huge hip rising mountaneously into the air. Associated with her are baetyles and other cult objects.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 338, Fig. 56A.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
6. Neumann, E., *op. cit.*, p. 51.

certain that they have a long history of continuity of religious impulse. It is only the intellectual development of mankind which brought about such a difference. And such changes occur every now and then.

It is not known whether actually serpent worship was prevalent in the Palaeolithic period, though it is shown along with other animals by the Palaeolithic artists.[1] It is not impossible that some sort of magic was associated with these drawings and by Mesolithic times, it had become a symbol- as in Mas d' Azil (at the foot of the pyrenees, about fifteen miles north-west of Foix, France) where it appears along with other marks on painted pebbles.[2] By many scholars it is regarded as a "material manifestation of an advance in religious belief on the earlier magic of the Aurignacian" man of Upper Palaeolithic period.[3]

PROTOHISTORIC PERIOD

Bronze Age (outside India).

The evolution of Mother Goddess cult was almost complete in the Bronze Age. Almost all the Bronze Age cultures witnessed Mother Goddess worship. The Bronze Age civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Aegean coast[4] and India have yielded enough materials in support. They go to prove that between the Indus and the Nile, the cult of Mother-Goddess was prevelant. It is very difficult to say precisely where this cult originated. We may, however, agree with Marshall that this cult originated in Anatolia, probably in Phrygia and spread afterwards throughout northern Asia.[5] Cultures of the so-called Chalcolithic period, throughout the world definitely witnessed the worship of Mother Goddess. Except Indian, other civilizations gave rise to myths regarding these goddesses which formed the back-bone of their religion. There is a similarity in the finds of the cult objects of Indus Valley and its Western counterpart which suggest possible similar beliefs, and similar religion. However, examination of the finds of the Bronze Age sites of the west is essential to have an idea about the Indus Valley finds.

In the age of hunting and of barbarous living only females were held responsible for creation and thus were sole object of adoration. But "with the establishment of husbandary and domestication, however, the function of the male in the process of generation became more apparent and vital, and the Mother Goddess then was

---

1. Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 36
2. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 36; *CA. A*, Vol. of Plates, I, p. 16.
4. Marshall, J., *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*, Vol. I, p. 50, between 'Persia and Aegean, notably in Elam, Mesopotamia, Transcaspia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine, Cyprus, Crete, the Cyclades, the Balkans and the Egypt'.
5. *Ibid*, p. 50, It is, however, not free from doubt to suppose the origin of the Mother Goddess cult at a particular place unless we locate the origin of civilization at a particular place and its spread afterwards.

assigned a spouse to play his role as the begetter, even though, as in Mesopotamia for example, he was her youthful son-lover or her servant."[1] The conception of son-lover is nothing peculiar for the primitive thinking. If we presume a supreme hand in creation either of male or female we will have to presume other coming later, and also a creation of the earlier. In India, Brahmā, the source of the whole creation, married a lady created out of himself-a case of daughter-wife. Similarly, if female energy is taken to be supreme creative authority the male must originate from her and she must have marital relationship with him to procreate. The Bronze Age seems to have advanced quite ahead in the field of abstract thinking. Naturally, besides Stone Age Virgin Goddess being retained in some form, new goddesses with child were introduced. And all myths centered around fertility and agriculture, the basic needs of the age. But the development of religious ideas amongst the primitive groups of mankind, was to a very large extent, conditioned by the social organisation of each group[2] and also the geographical surroundings.

The Sumerians were impressed by the great power of Earth besides air and sky because it yields grass for the cattle and grain for man. It is natural to be attracted by the earth's importance in the age of agriculture. Hunting had ceased to be a primary occupation. Bronze Age was the age of developed agriculture and husbandary, though, agriculture started from Neolithic times. Sumerians, therefore, deified Mother Earth in different forms, as Nin-tu (the lady who gives birth), Nin-makh (the exalted queen) or Nin-Khursag, etc., besides, Enlil, the Air God.[3] In Mesopotamia Mother Earth was the inexhaustible source of new life. She is goddess Inanna. Similarly, we have Īshtar in Akkad. There is a marked similarity between the myths concerning both these goddesses. Inanna as the embodiment of creative source stood "in the same relation to Dumuzi as did Ishtar to Tammuz, the young god who personified the autumnal decline in the seasonal cycle."[4]

According to the myths the young god died annually and was rescued and resuscicated by the goddess; so she was the constant source of regeneration and the young god being only instrumental in the process as her agent.[5] These two goddesses were "inevitably identified Mother-Earth. brought into relation with the seasonal cycle. being the source and embodiment of fecundity symbolized in the fertile soil."[6] These goddesses, no doubt, were having benevolent character

---

1. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 77, In *Rigveda* we find Surya to be son at the same time lover of Uṣas.
2. Hawkes and Woolly, *History of Mankind*, Vol. I, p. 700.
3. Hawkes and Woolly, *op. cit*, p. 702.
4. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 79.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

where Allatu, the goddess of nether regions symbolising another aspect of the Earth-Mother in her chthonian capacity.[1]

In Egypt the case was different. No doubt, there are many powerful goddesses in Egyptian mythology but they do not play main part in the process of regeneration with the young god being only instrumental in the process as her agent as was the case with Mesopotamia. In Egypt, male solar deity is the heavenly father of the Pharaoh and not the goddess, and the solar deity also took initiative as it was, above all, the life giver.[2] Isis became the syncretic goddess of many names and in her essential nature she was not a mother goddess but a "throne woman personifying the sacred coronation stool charged with the mysterious power of Kingship."[3] And to this extent "she was the source of vitality before she became the prototype of the faithful wife and of mother-hood, representing the female creative principle."[4] In art the figure of Isis has been shown suckling the infant Horus. She, therefore, definitely represents a true mother goddess. Isis had often "neither lover nor husband; but had spontaneously conceived and given birth to a son, whom she suckled among the reeds."[5] The Syrian Mother-Goddess also 'conceives without ceasing'.[6] Isis was "identified with almost all Egyptian goddesses in some capacity, and as 'queen of all gods and goddesses' and 'mother of heaven', she was associated especially with Hathor 'the heavenly cow', Nut the Sky goddess, and Neith of the Sais in the Western Delta, all of whom shared the same attributes. It was Hathor, however, who was the Mother-Goddess *par-excellence*."[7]

Hathor is represented as cow,[8] an animal which acquired fertility significance from time immemorial. Nut, the Sky goddess was also conceived as a cow. Hence, Cow commanded special reverence of the Egyptian people.

The Anatolian goddesses were primarily Earth mothers. Earth definitely played a vital role in their mythology. Cybele was another powerful goddess of the ancient period worshipped by the Phrygians. She was a great Asiatic goddess of fertility.[9] "Her worship had its origin in Asia Minor in pre-historic times, possibly, prior to the advent of the Phrygians."[10] She was the goddess of fertility, mistress of wild life in nature, looked after the well being of men and animals,

---

1. *Ibid.*, p. 80; Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, pp. 43ff.
2. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 294.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
5. Maspero, G., *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 131.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
7. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 82.
8. India in the Indus Valley period gave prominence to Bull and not to Cow which is remarkable. And in the later period also though cow commanded reverence of extreme nature yet no anthropomorphic representation is noticed.
9. Fraser, *The Golden Bough*, p. 347.
10. Hastings (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, p. 377.

protected people in war, and the youthful lover Attis. She was the guardian of the dead.[1]

Similar to the other civilization a young male divinity was associated with the Goddess in Crete and the Aegean. A number of art objects discovered from Knossos and other areas of this region throw considerable light on the above subject. The Goddesses here have been represented in different forms, perhaps, depicting different aspects of the Great Mother. On Cylinders and Seals these representations appear.[2] The Mother Goddess of Crete "appears to have possessed the attributes of the various goddesses who were differentiated in classic Mythology".[3] And so we have three outstanding forms of her—the Snake goddess, the Dove goddess and the Lady of wild creatures.[4] The Snake goddess found at the central shrine at Knossos is well-clad, with bare breast and snakes coiling round her body and waist and holding one in hand.[5] Similar snake goddesses have been found at Gournia in East Crete.[6] As Evans suggests[7] she is represented in her destructive chthonic role and she was venerated as "the visible impersonation of the spirits of the household".[8] Though "at Gournia, which was neither a house nor a palace Shrine, she appears to have been the Chathonic Earth Mother, Mistress of the nether regions, as well as the goddess of fertility."[9] The sacred tree and the pillar connecting the sky, the earth and the nether regions was the most prominent embodiment of the Mother-Goddess in Minoan Crete.[10] In the capacity of mistress of the Beasts, She is shown surrounded with a multiplicity of animals, real and fabulous and which ultimately connect her with hunting and wild life.[11] Unlike this we have from Indus Valley a seal depicting similar theme but a male figure in place of female. So it depicts the Master of Beasts. The Cretan Mistress of the Beasts is associated with a male attendant. Hence "there can be little doubt that a young male divinity was associated with the goddess in Crete and the Aegean, though except as Master of Animals he was seldom much in evidence, and when he did appear it was in a subordinate capacity. In one or other of her several roles, aid was sought from her for the promotion of fertility, the regularity of the seasons, the well being of the natural order and the protection

---

1. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 97.
2. Mackenzie, *Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe*, p. 167.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
5. Evans, Sir Arthur, *Palace of Minos*, Vol. I, pp. 500ff.
6. Williams, B.E., *Gournia* (Philadelphia, 1908), pp. 47ff.
7. Fvans, Sir Arthur, *The Earlier Religion of Greece*, 1913, p. 25.
8. Evans, Sir Arthur, *Palace of Minos*, Vol. IV, pp. 138-159.
9. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 100.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
11. Evans, A. *Tree and Pillar Cult*, p. 19, Figs. 12-14, pp. 66ff; Nilson, *Minoan and Mycenaean Religion* (London 2nd Ed. 1950) p. 356.

of the household."[1] In a wide area from Syria and beyond to Crete, we find so many forms of the Great Goddess recurring, and naturally we may discern a fundamental underlying unity in the personification of the female principle and the "Syncretism and fusion were so complete that they can be explained only as several forms and names of one and the same all embracing divine figure—the Mother Goddess in association with her Subordinate Satellite, the young God."[2]

A number of nude goddesses have also been found from different sites of the West Asiatic regions and Egypt, which are interesting in their attitudes. The nude goddess with her arms stretched and raised over head discovered from Egypt displays her bare breasts, an emphatic symbol of mother-hood and it must be the Earth Goddess; it may be dated in about 5000 B C.[3] This type of image of the goddess has also been found from Mesopotamia (Elam and other sites) and from India.[4]

In West Asiatic regions from the Bronze Age sites a number of Clay figurines, either red or grey, has been found which are quite interesting in their posture. The figurines, nude and standing with hands holding the breasts, are probably associated with the worship of the Great Mother Goddess.[5] Holding of the breasts is just like a mother feeding a child. The usual posture is that a mother holds head of the baby by her left hand and by the right hand holds her breast to facilitate the baby keeping the nipple in its mouth. If, at all, a mother has to feed two children at a time she must hold both the breasts by her both the hands for the same purpose Hence holding of breast is a true sign of motherhood. In this attitude she is the 'Milk giver' a 'great nourisher'. Similarly, squatting posture may indicate her creative aspect as child is generally born to a woman in squatting position.

Nude clay female figures have been discovered from almost all the sites of Bronze Age world. The nude goddess was at one time very wide spread over all parts of West-Asia-Sumer, Mesopotamia, Ancient Iran and extended as far East as Gangetic Valley.[6] The Mount of Venus with pubic hair is conspicuously indicated in the shape of triangle covering the whole of the abdomen in the terracotta female figurine discovered from Tureno Tape near Asterabad.[7] Nudity is, definitely, a characteristic feature of Mother Goddess. The wide distribution of nude female figures definitely goes to suggest the wide geographical spread of the cult of the Mother Goddess. The girdle appearing on some of these figures bear some special significance. It is taken to be emphatic significance of a child

---

1. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods.* p. 105.
2. James, E.O., *The Ancient Gods*, p. 106.
3. *Art News*, Sumer 1957, p. 44.
4. Ganguly, *Indian Terracotta Art*, p. 4.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
6. Ganguly, O.C., *Indian Terracotta Art*, p. 11.
7. *Ibid.*, Fig. (a).

bearing fertility feature. "The *Atharvaveda* specified the girdle (*mekhalā*) as a long life (*āyssuyam*) charm. So, the series of nude figurines, all having girdles, may be recognised as cult images of vedic affiliation."[1] Glotz remarks about the nude goddesses that, "She is the Great Mother. It is she who makes all nature bring forth. All existing things are emanations from her. She is the Madonna carrying the Holy child. She continually appears with an escort of beasts, for she is the mistress of wild animals, snakes, birds, and fishes. She even makes the plant grow by her universal facundity perpetuating the vegetative force of which she is the fountain head."[2]

Harappa Culture

A large number of female figurines along with seals and sealings was discovered from Indus Valley sites belonging to 3rd-2nd Millenium B.C. which show the prevalence of the worship of the Mother Goddess cult; but along with the feminine worship, the evidence of male worship is also not lacking. The horned '*Trimūrti*' sitting in '*Mahāyogin* posture on a seal, being surrounded by animals, hinting at the Pasupati aspect of Lord Śiva, is definitely an evidence of the prevalence of male worship. A number of phallic stones have also been discovered along with ring stones, symbolising the male and the female generative power. The *anāryas*, against whom the Vedic Āryans scored victory, were phallic-worshippers (*Śiśna devaḥ*). And it is generally agreed that these *anāryas*, were the original occupants of the cities of Mohenjodaro, Harappa and other similar places.

The *Liṅga* and *Yoni* worship has a wide prevalence in India and its origin may be traced back to the early Indus Valley Culture on the basis of these discoveries. However, there is difference of opinion between scholars regarding the true identification of the ring-stones (identified as *Yoni*) and the Cylindrical stones (identified as *Liṅgas*). It is interesting to note that these stone pieces have been discovered throughout the extent of the Indus Valley from different sites in the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan. Marshall identifies them as *Liṅga* and *Yoni*. It is a different question whether Śiva *Liṅgas* are phallic emblems or not.[3] They are symbols of fertility and creation. In "India itself baetylie stones, such as those which guard the fields and cross-ways, are just as numerous as phallic ones and are common objects of worship with the primitive tribes, among whom they are specially associated with the Mother-Goddess."[4] The prevalence of *Liṅga* and

---

1. Ganguly, O.C. *Indian Terracotta Art*, p. 11.
2. Glotz, G., *Aegean, Civilization*, p. 245.
3. Swami Sankrananda, *Rigvedic Culture of the Pre-historic Indus*, Vol. I, p. 132, The author tries to prove that the *Śiva-Liṅga* does not symbolise a phallus and its origin, therefore, is not pre-vedic but vedic and it represents the celestial hills, the celestial tree, the *stūpa*-shaped *yūpa* etc.
4. Marshall, J., *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, Vol. I, p. 61, Plates XIII. 9-12 and XIV 6 & 8 for the phallic stones.

Yoni worship in India leads us to suppose that later Hinduism absorbed this cult into its own. The male god of Indus Valley emerged into the great Hindu God Śiva, a member of Hindu Triad, whereas the female goddess became the great Śakti associated with Śiva. Śiva and his Śakti, Pārvatī or Devī, being represented by *Liṅga* and *Yoni* are still worshipped in India widely.[1] Hence, Hinduism is considerably indebted to Indus Valley Culture. Prof. A.L. Basham rightly observes that the, "religion of Harappa people had some features suggesting those characteristics of later Hinduism which are not to be found in the earliest stratum of Indian religions literature" and the "Mother Goddess, for instance, reappears only after the lapse of over a thousand years from the fall of Harappa."[2] Again about the religious philosophy of the Indus Valley people nothing can be said with certainty. In the opinion of Oppert the Indus Valley people "believed in the existence of one supreme spirit of Heaven, with whom was associated and admitted to an equal and eventually even superior share of power, the Goddess of Earth."[3]

Among the female figurines some of them might be toys. But the figures of mother and child[4] and pregnant woman[5] appear to be religious in character and might have something to do with magic in connection with the purpose of procuring offspring.[6] Inspite of the similarities found between these figurines and such discoveries from Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Aegean coast, it is very difficult to say anything with certainty unless the Indus Script is convincingly deciphered.

The use of clay for the purpose of modelling these figures and the seals and sealings is an indication of the necessity to use Mother Earth for an image of Earth or Earth Mother.[7] Murray has classified these figurines into three groups : the Divine Woman or Ishtar type; the Divine Mother or Isis type; and the Personified *Yoni* or Baubo type.[8] Dasgupta has justified the above classification by referring to some concrete finds from Indus Valley and he has differentiated the religious figurines from the secular ones,[9] since secular figurines must have some secular aspect of life to be associated with, whereas religious ones may not have any.[10]

---

1. It is interesting to note that the Indus Valley finds do not include any cylindrical stone fitted into ring stone, which is opposed to modern practice.
2. Basham, A.L., *The Wonder that was India*, p. 22.
3. Oppert, *The Original Inhabitants of India*, p. 574; Basham observes that it was a type of religion just practised by the early agricultural communities of the contemporary world, centering round fertility rites and the worship of a Mother-Goddess, *The wonder that was India*, p. 13.
4. Marshall, *op. cit.*, pl. XCV 20.
5. *Ibid.*, pl. XCV 24, 29, 30.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. I p. 49.
7. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, p. 258.
8. Murray, M., Female Fertility Figurines, *JRAI*, Vol. LXIV, 1934.
9. Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 80.
10. Vats-Harappa, *ASI-AR 1926-27*, p. 108, pl. XXIII-C, A woman in seated posture whose upper part of the body is absolutely bare, is kneading bread (a secular or non-religious work).

The Divine woman or Ishtar type has been discovered from a number of Indus Valley Sites[1] with their upper body nude, and arms kept in a dispassionate manner[2] whereas the Divine Mother or Isis type is represented by a child suckling the breast of the female figurine, though this type is comparatively few.[3] These clay figurines were kept in every house and streets of Mohenjodaro and Harappa[4], as a tutelary divinity much as the Mother Goddess which is taken to be still the guardian of the house and village in India presiding over child birth and daily needs.[5] In the form of *grāma-devatā* she is worshipped throughout India. They may be manifestations of Mother Earth whose worship as a household goddess in many parts of India is prevalent today even.[6]

A number of legless figurines have also been discovered from Harappan sites which have been identified with the Earth Goddess by Sir Aurel Stein[7] on the basis of Buddhist and Hellenic iconography. Mackay, however, does not agree to this identification and thinks that this truncation was from utilitarian point of view which made these figurines 'stand more securely' and were 'household deities kept on a self or in a little recess in the wall'.[8] Piggot takes these to be a grim embodiment of the Mother-Goddess who is also the guardian of the dead as underworld deity concerned alike with the corpse and the seed burried beneath the earth.'[9] In disagreement with Mackay it may be pointed out that these legless types are definitely representations of Earth Goddess which suggest a parallel with the later images of Earth Goddess, in which she is portrayed as half emerging from the ground[10] and such half female figurines have been discovered from Crete[11] also which are undoubtedly divine in character.

1. Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, mentions these sites : Mohenjodaro, Chanhu daro, Lahunjodaro, Lakhiya, Harappa, Chiridamb, Kulli, Mehi, Periano-ghundai, Dabor-kot, Moghul-ghundai, Kundani mound.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 81, figs. 12-17, 21, 22, 29, 32, 36 and 40.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
4. Mackay, *Early Indus Civilizations*, 2nd Ed., p. 54.
5. James, E.O.,-*The cult of the Mother-Goddess*, p. 24.
6. Crooke, *Religion and Folk lore of North India*, Vol. I, p. 29
7. MASI No. 43, pp. 126-162, pl. XXII.
8. Mackey, *Chanhudaro Excavations* (*1935-36*), pp. 151-52
9. Piggot, *Prehistoric India*, p. 127. This type gives an idea of the terrific aspect of the goddess Kālī just like the later Hindu goddess Kālī represented by 'terrible and loathy images of the maligrant Kālī'. Marshall, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 50, pl. XII. 6-10.
10. Marshall, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 49-50. These figures cannot be toys. Their attitude clearly shows a parallel to the Buddhist Earth Goddess depicted as rising out of the ground in *bas-reliefs*: Grunwedd, *Buddhist Art in India*, pp. 100ff; Vedic Goddess Usas is footless Griffith, *Hyms of the Ṛigveda*, *RV*. 6.59.6, p. 629.
11. Evans, Sir Arthur, *Palace of Minos at Knossos*, Vol. II, p. 340, fig. 193. Since certain half-figure is a goddess, Indus figure can not but be a goddess.

In this connection a few figurines discovered from Mohenjodaro deserve proper attention. One of them has her right hand raised above to her forehead,[1] and other has both the hands raised above.[2] Marshall takes them to be figurines representing a votive-offering or a priestess in an attitude of adoration.[3] A similar bronze figure from Knossos[4] contradicts Marshall's contention, since it has a triple coil of snake falling down her back which is against its being a priestess.[5] Some may get its clue in the protecting aspect of the Earth Goddess. But probably she is represented as the supporter of Sky. Earth was taken by the Vedic Āryans either in conjunction with Sky[6] or separately. The Sky appears to be a bowl inverted upon the flat earth. So it would have been a natural conception among the primitive people that the Earth supported the Sky. In Egypt Nut was a Goddess, the personification of Sky and Earth was a God named Geb. Whereas Vedic Āryans personified Earth as a Goddess and Sky as a God. A female supporter of male is not unnatural from biological point of view. Hence it is very likely that the Earth though personified as Goddess supported Sky unlike her Egyptian counterpart (Geb) who lies on the ground.[7]

The images of earth-mother are generally nude. The nudity of the figurines is common to the most archaic figures and the Indus Valley figurines are nude but for jewellery, wide girdle and remarkable head-dress. This has been regarded by Mackay as a "transitional stage between a time when no clothing was the usual thing and a period when garments were regarded as adding divinity,"[8] but in Babylonia nude figures were found till very late times. However, nudity of the female figurines does not presuppose that Indus Valley people remained naked. We have ample evidence to prove the presence of clothing in Indus Valley and the nudity was simply an example of 'religious conservatism.'[9]

Throughout the world Earth was identified with women in all stages of culture.[10] The fecundity of Earth was taken to be equal to that of women.[11] The Earth, upon

---

1. Marshall, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 50, foot-note 6.
2. *Ibid.*, pl. XII-I.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 50, footnote 6.
4. Evans, Sir Arthur, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 507, fig. 365.
5. We do not get snakes on such Indus Examples.
6. Macdonall and Keith, *Vedic Index*, Vol. II, p. 17.
7. James, E.O., *Ancient Gods*, p. 86, fig. 35. In Egyptian representation Sky goddess is supported by Air-God Shu and Earth-God Geb lies on the ground. Perhaps Indus Valley people kept Earth and Sky in direct relationship like their successor Vedic Aryans who generally take them together (*Dyāvāpṛithivī*).
8. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, Vol. I, p. 265.
9. Childe, *Danube in Prehistory*, p. 70, foot-note 4.
10. Briffault, R., *The Mothers*, Vol. III, p. 59. 'The Mother and the soil are alike'. In *Atharvaveda*, XIV, 2-14. a woman was called 'seed field'.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 55. It is perhaps this belief that led to the conception of Corn-Goddess and such ideas are present to this day in the songs of the peasants of Greece.

which man was born and into whose womb he disappeared after death, attracted attention and imagination of men from very early times and so it was conceived as a Mother Goddess and in some cases her cult even developed into that of a supreme-mother cult.[1] And the worship of Mother Goddess 'from time immemorial' is 'deep-rooted and ubiquitous' in India.[2] The Earth Goddess is definitely associated with agriculture.[3] And their 'supremacy in agricultural religions is generally marked by their complete disassociation from the male supreme god.'[4] 'They have', thus, no husbands, they are 'virgins.'[5] Earth's virginity is very natural in its conception. She gives birth to sun every morning. This observation must have led man to suppose that Earth though a mother was a virgin, since she effected birth without masculine help—an immaculate conception. It is only in later mythology that she was provided with a husband, still her virginity was not completely forgotten. So the virgin mother was worshipped in Indus Valley; she being a direct representation of Earth. The legless type may hint at the conception of immovable earth around which sun revolved.[6]

The Mother Goddess was conceived in many forms dealing with different aspects of the Great Mother. One of them was the Divine Mother or the Human Mother or the mother of Gods. This aspect is represented by few mother and child figurines discovered from Mohenjodaro.[7] Some of these figures hold the baby to the left breast,[8] and some to the right.[9] In some of the representations the figure is shown holding the left hand to the mouth 'as if counselling silence, though there is probably some other meaning to this gesture as a feeding babe would hardly be asleep.[10] Mackey sees probability of its being votive figure,[11] particularly those having swollen base which indicated their being pregnant.[12] This aspect of the Great Mother symbolises the nourishing or the feeding mother since a baby is being allowed to suckle milk from the breast. The earliest divine woman can be none

---

1. *ERE*, Vol. V. pp. 6-7.
2. Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.
3. Since it is earth which yields corn for the food of human beings.
4. Briffault, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 169.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 169. Though a mother, she is called a *Yuvatī* (Youthful maiden) and *Sajoṣā* (good girl); *RV* 7.34.23 ; *TB.*, 3-1.1.12; Aditi is divine virgin. See Swāmī Saṅkarānanda's *Ṛigvedic Culture of the Pre-historic Indus*, p. 138.
6. This was the ancient belief, Aristotle and even Ptolemy endorsed it. And such belief prevailed till it was challanged and proved otherwise by Copernicus in the early 16th Century who showed that Earth revolved round the Sun.
7. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, p. 269; Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 49, pl. XCV 20.
8. Mackay, *op. cit.*, pls. LXXV.7.12; LXXVI. 13.
9. *Ibid.*, pl. LXXII.2.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 269; pl. LXXV. 7.12.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
12. *Ibid.*, pl. LXXVI. 7.12.

else than the mother who gives birth to child and later on feeds it. Creation is the duty of women. Nothing can come out itself out of nothingness as the Vedic philosophy advocates, but only mother has the power to produce something or to create. The very creative force in India has been identified with female principle. The mother aspect, therefore, attracted the reverence of the primitive men particularly in the Bronze Age.[1] In this age a subordinate god is added to the Great Goddess, with a definite myth to suit such an association. The Indus Valley mother and child figurines too were similar to Egyptian Isis and Horus.

The Great Mother was also conceived as Goddess of fertility and fecundity. From Harappa[2] an interesting seal has been discovered dealing with agricultural harvest scene. On this seal one side depicts a nude female figure upside down, legs apart and a plant issuing from the womb and on the other side men and women figures, a man holding a ploughshare or oblation spoon (a knife or sickle according to Marshall) in one hand and in the other a clod of earth and the women is squatting before him with raised hands.[3] The scene is in conformity with the ploughing ceremony as described in the *Sūtra* literature.[4] The representation here is definitely of Earth Goddess concerned with vegetation. This has a marked similarity with a terracotta sealing of the early Gupta period from Bhita where the plant is issuing from the neck and not the womb. The association of the Goddess with vegetation

---

1. In India we have no parallel to the 'Venuses' of the Stone Age Europe.
2. Vats. M.S., *Excavations at Harappa*, p. 42, pl. XCIII.304.
3. Rev. H. Heras, has discussed this seal threadbare. He takes the figure upside down with plant issuing to be the Male God and identifies the object issuing to be *membrum virile* of the male fertility God. But the minute observation of the seal shows otherwise. The idea that a cockroach is attached to the membrum virile is misleading. The legs of the cockroach can never be depicted like the figure in question falling downwards resembling leaves. Hence it is nothing except plant. Cf. Law, B.C. (Ed.), *D.R. Bhandarkar Volume*, p. 120. Marshall in *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, p. 52, takes standing male with an object (either knife of sickle) and the female with dishevelled hair sitting with hands raised towards sky, depicting human sacrifice and two animal figures to be the two ministrants of the diety. Heras also in a way supports Marshall's contention of sacrifice.
4. *Kauśikasūtra* (20, 1-24), gives a vivid account. The man goes to plough the field. Then wife comes, asks the husband who holds a clod of earth taken out of the furrow where remnants of the oblation were poured. 'Have you ploughed ?' He replies 'What have you brought ?' She replies 'Gain, Wealth, Prosperity, Progency, Cattle, Food, and enjoyment of Food.' Therefore, the logical explanation of the scene in question would be that the man is holding ploughshare or oblation spoon in one hand and a clod of earth in the other. His wife is sitting before him legs stretched and trying to bring down some object possibly food for her husband or it may have the symbolic bringing down those treasures as already mentioned. *Aśvalāyana Grihya Sūtra* (II. 10. 3-4) and *Aśvalāyana Gṛihya Kārikā* (II. 19) goes further to say that the householder would go in the direction of the wind. Hence wife sitting before him has her hair flying backwards. The two animals may be pigs connected with the Mother Goddess ; See for detailed discussion author's article "A Fresh study of an Indus Valley Sealing" published in the *Patna University Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Jan. 1965, pp. 182ff.

is well worked out in the Śākambharī aspect of Devī.[1] The association of vegetation with the Goddess is further proved by another seal[2] where a horned female figure stands between the two branches of a tree, with her hair falling down in coils. A devotee is kneeling beside the tree and a goat (perhaps) is standing by the side or behind devotee. Below them seven human figures holding something in hand and wearing one-horned dresses can be noticed. Both the hands of these figures appear to be falling downwards with some action at the end near the waist and tail like hair formed in a coil at the end. It falls in straight line at 30° angle. There is a similarity of head dress between the kneeling figure and the Goddess. Mackay[3] thinks that both may be Goddesses and the seven figures (seven being a mystic number) may also be deities of lesser rank (here we may find a suggestion for the later development of the Saptamātrikā conception). It appears that the Goddess with two horned headdress is definitely a Tree Goddess or a Fertility Goddess or a Goddess of Vegetation or the Forest Mother. The kneeling figure with similar head-dress may be a priest, the one who is exalted in status than ordinary human beings and classed in the status as the Goddess herself. The human faced goat, also a devotee, and the seven figures may represent the devotees who collectively worship the Goddess. They appear to be engaged in some sort of religious dance (may be of magical significance) being a part of the ritual.[4] Goat was a favourite of Tree Goddess—Mother Goddess, and the 'Goat with a human face is certainly not a sacrifical animal.[5] Whatever the actual meaning may be, the connection of the tree spirit with goat is proved by the fact that 'in Europe at the classical period tree spirits were believed to take the shape of a goat or to have Goat's feet.'[6] In the Vedic period also Goat was taken to be sacred. The sacrifical goat *Pañchandana Aja* is equated with many especially with *Agni.*[7] It was sacred to Pushan. 'The she-goat is identified with *Māyā* or *Prakṛiti* and he-goat with *Mayin* or Maheśvara.[8]

---

[1] *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Canto 92. 43; Banerjea J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 489.

[2] Mackay, E. J., *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, pl. XCIV-430; Vats, M.S., *Excavation at Harappa*, pl. XCIII. 307. A deity is standing under *peepal* branch made into an arch.

[3] Mackay, E.J., *op. cit.*, p. 338; so far the figure between the branches of the tree is concerned according to T.G. Aravamuthan 'it is not probable that the figure in the tree is a female', *JBRS* 1948, Vol. XXXIV, pts. III & IV, p. 36. He takes it to be a God and explains the scene thus : 'a male god kneels as suppliant before a male god in a tree who casts an approving glance at an exhibit, or offering, which is beside him, and a goat big and bold, stands witness, in the foreground, *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[4] It is suggested by the tail falling from the head in action.

[5] Mackay, *op. cit.*, p. 338; devotee might have disguised himself or herself as the favourite animal or the *vāhana* of Tree Goddess to escape her wrath which he might be apprehending or to secure her blessings before his or her journey into the forest for hunting

[6] *Encylopaedia Britanica* (14th Edition), Vol. VII, pp. 189-92.

[7] *AV*, IX. 5. 7f.

[8] Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 206; *Śvetāśvara Upnishad*, IV. 5f.

Hence, we get here two separate Goddesses for tree and plant—one can be designated as the Goddess of woods (Forest Mother)[1] and the other Goddess of Fecundity (Corn Mother).[2]

The headdress having two horns appears to be very popular with the primitive people and particularly with the Mother Goddess figures. We have such examples from all over the world. The [Egyptian Goddess Isis has a headdress, which is definitely adorned with two horns with or without disc in the middle.[3] The Clay Goddesses from Crete of Minoan period too have such horns though small in size.[4] A Parthian Goddess of 1st-2nd Century A.D. also has two horns looking like a crescent on the head above dressed hair.[5] The tree woman from Castellion also have two feather-like objects attached to the side figures while middle one is devoid of them.[6] Australians in their ceremonial attire add two pointing sticks serving as horns.[7] Hence it appears that the horns added divinity or superiority to the person. From utilitarian point of view also primitive men used some sort of pointed stick or weapon on their head fastened tightly to serve as weapon. Its purpose might have been similar to that of animals.[8]

Another type of the Great Mother is concerned with the animal kingdom. As the 'Mistress of Beasts' she is depicted as a female with hind quarters of a tiger on steatite seal from Mohenjodaro.[9] Sahni takes this seal to be of 'no ordinary interest'. In this figure there is queer mixture of two animals quite opposite in nature, the ram or goat and the tiger—a queer blending of meek and the ferocious. The figure has also a long pigtail. The upper part of the body being meek suggests benevolent character of the Goddess. This figure definitely represents a Goddess of the entire animal kingdom.[1] Not only animals, birds also attracted the attention of the Indus Valley people. Mackay,[2] observes on a figure of Mother Goddess from Mohenjodaro a dove-like object seated on her headdress. If it be dove then the figure signifies a bird mother. Thus, categorically speaking, Indus Valley people worshipped Mother Goddess in all her forms—Earth Mother, Human Mother or Mother of Gods, Forest Mother, Animal Mother, Corn Mother, Bird Mother. That means they conceived Mother Goddess as the mother of every thing—animate and inanimate within their knowledge. And the worship of a particular type must be motivated by expecting certain benefit out of her special power of safeguarding life and property from the menace of subjects of their respective domain.

---

[1] In *Rigveda*, X, 146, Jungle Goddess Araṇyānī is invoked as the 'Mother of Beasts' and represented as whole. She is Vana Devī or Banaspati Mā. In *Jataka* stories we find plenty of references to the Tree Fairies.

[2] This reminds of the Mexican Corn Mother. It is interesting to note in this connection that Indus people conceived facundity only through the female generative organ. Therefore, we find up side down figure of the earth (The Corn Mother) and from the womb through the generative organ plant comes out. The womb is just below the plant as earth remains below the plant. Hence it a crude representation of Corn Mother. Later on refinement comes in its representation on the sealing from Bhita belonging to the early Gupta period.

[3] Neumann, E., *The Great Mother*, pl. 4 (with disc), pl. 44 (without dics).

[4] *Ibid.*, pl. 27B.

[5] *Ibid.*, pl. 49.

[6] Campbell, J., *The Masks of the Gods : Primitive Mythology*, Illustration on p. 380.

[7] *Ibid.*, Illustration on p. 303.

[8] It cannot be only the animal instinct which motivated primitive minds for such a borrowing, rather it was due to their helplessness while fighting some other animals. The animals, while their four legs are caught attack with their mouth or horns but men do not have such advantage of either attacking teeth or horns.

[9] *ASI—AR, 1929-30*; Sahni *op. cit.*, p. 108-9 ; Vats, *EH*, p. 43, pl. XCI, 249—body and fore-part are bovine, hind-part is of lion, face human and trunk of an elephant.

We have also evidence to support the prevalence of water worship[3] and *Nāga* worship[4] in the Indus Valley. Snakes have been characterised feminine and the *Nāgas* have been associated with Mother Goddess in contemporary civilizations. The Cretan Snake Goddess is famous. The Greek Goddess Gaia is a serpent Mother. Manasā of later Hinduism is a sister of Vāsukī and the mother of serpents.

With regard to the agricultural rite observed by the Indus Valley people, a three-sided tapering terracotta prism from Harappa[5] deserves attention. It gives us the ritual observed by the Indus Valley people at the time of drought and such practice is observed still to-day in some parts of north India.[6] On each of its three faces is a standing 'mythical figure' of which 'one appears to be feminine, but its head is altogether obliterated, while the arms and lower legs, which are probably not human, are also blurred.' Other 'figure is human above the waist and bovine below', the last 'to judge from the massive hips, also appears to have animal legs.'[7] The figures appear to be holding staff across their shoulder which may be taken to be a plough (*hala*).[1] The association of *hala* with a Goddess is no new thing for India. Sita is an agricultural deity, though literally it means 'furrow' and there is mention of sacrifices at which oblations are offered to her.[2]

---

[1] Mother Goddess in later Hinduism is associated with tiger, which became the *vāhana* of the Goddess.

[2] Mackay, *FEM*, pl. LXXVI, 5.

[3] Marshall, J., *MIC*, Vol. I, p. 75; water is feminine, 'the maternal water not only contains, it also nourished and transforms, since all living things build up and preserve their existence with the water or milk of the earth ; also Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 70, pl. XII, 12.

[5] Vats, *EH*, pl. XCIII, 305, p. 44.

[6] Among these figures the middle one is holding a plough-like object. The side figures may be women who served for bullocks in holding the yoke. All appear to be stripped naked. This may remind that in times of drought women are said to go to the fields at night and strip themselves naked. Two of them yoke themselves to a plough and a third drives it calling on Earth Mother for help Cf. Crooke, *Religion and Folk Lore of Northern India*, pp. 45-47. Among the adivasis of south Bihar also such practice is prevalent, vide News published in the '*Indian Nation*' Patna, Vol. XXXV, No. 148, Thursday, June 2, 1965, Latest Morning Editon.

[7] Vats, *EH*, Vol. I. p. 44.

Now coming to the symbolic aspect of the Mother Goddess, there can be only three symbolic representations—breasts, womb, and the vulva (since these three organs differentiate females from males) and these represent the three main qualities of the supreme deity - preservative, consummative, and creative. In many of the figurines we find vulva conspicuously depicted. Indus Valley civilization yieds ring stones also identified with *yoni*—the generative organ of female. *Yoni* is the symbol of creation. Creation is directly connected with the *yoni* and not the womb. The breasts are the feeders on which a child depends. It gives elixir of life to the newly born child. It is, therefore, a representative of preservative aspect of the Great Goddess. It suggests, therefore, one of the aspects of Earth Mother who gives corn to her children to eat and water to drink. The womb symbolises yet another aspect of the Earth Mother. It speaks of Earth being a great container. Earth keeps everything within its womb, produces it and consumes it again. So the womb represented by woman with enlarged belly symbolizes the consummative aspect of the Earth Mother—the Great Mother.

Hence we can with certainty say that Indus Valley people worshipped Mother Goddess in all her aspects and it is this that led to the evolution of Mother cult in later Hinduism. Otherwise the Vedic Āryans gave preference to Gods, and Goddesses never got preference at their hands.[3]

---

1. Vats. *EH*, Vol. I. p, 44, footnote 2.
2. Ramgopal, *India of Vedic Kalpa Sūtras*, p. 466; *Gobhila Griha Sūtra* I.424; *Khadira Griha Sūtra*, I. 5.37, *Gautama Dharma Sūtra*, XXVIII. 3.4; and *Manu*, IX. 105.
3. Farnell, *Greece and Babylon*, pp. 95-96. 'There is no example of ancient Āryans, whether in India or elsewhere, having elevated a female deity to the supreme position occupied by these Mother Goddesses'.

CHAPTER 3

MOTHER GODDESS IN THE VEDIC PERIOD

A new era emerged in the socio-religious history of India with the advent ot the Āryans. There is no unanimity among scholars about the date of their settlement here. Some authorities take it to be 2000 B.C.; others 1700 B.C. whereas Prof. Macdonall adheres to 1200 B.C.[1] Whatever date may be assigned to their settlement in India, it is obvious that they had a definite culture of their own quite distinct from that of the authors of Harappa Culture. The social and religious organization of the Vedic Āryans was based upon the principle of 'father right' whereas the representative communities of the 'Brown' race was based upon the principle of 'mother right'.[2] The communities of 'Brown' race were worshippers of Mother Cult, primarily in the form of folk-religion whereas the Vedic Āryans were speculative thinkers reflected through the *Upniṣads* prominence to goddesses among the Āryans being given during the obscure period prior to the revival of the Brahmanism.[3] We, therefore, find a change in this period as the Āryans brought with themselves their own beliefs and practices. However, in the later period during the process of Āryanisation, pre-Āryan elements also got mingled into Āryan beliefs which gave birth to popular Hindu religion, remarkably different from the Vedic.

The entire Vedic literature is full of religious fervour. The gods and goddesses have been invoked in the hymns. The critical examination of the nature of the Vedic gods and the religion itself would be quite revealing. There is a difference of opinion among scholars about the nature of the Vedic worship. Max Muller[4] over-emphasised Nature worship in the Vedas, which was supported by Macdonell[5] and Keith[6] also. Whereas *Hillebrandt*[7] found the omnipresence of the lunar myth.

---

1. Macdonella and Keith, *Vedic Index* (1912), p. VIII.
2. Mackenzie, *Indian Myth and Legend*, p. XXX.
3. *Ibid.*, p. XL.
4. Max Muller, *The Vedas*, p. 106.
5. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 2.
6. Keith, H.O.S., 31, p. 58.
7. Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 14; Hillebrandt's *Vedische Mythologie* (3 Vols. Breslen, 1891-1902).

Oldenberg[1] noticed planetary representation, and Renou[2] took Sun to be the all pervading, ever present force. Bergaignes has yet another suggestion to offer that all mythological portrayals are variants of the sacred fire and the sacrificial liquor. The theory of Nature worship as propounded by Max Müller and supported by other eminent Vedic Scholars has received wide acceptance, and truly we find different natural phenomena and human qualities personified as gods and goddesses.

We come across a number of goddesses in the vast extent of the Ṛigvedic literature, *viz* Uṣas, Rātrī, Rākā, Sinīvālī, Guṅgū, Aditi, Pṛithivī, Diti, Svasti, Pṛiśni, Puramdhi, Anumati, Āpdevis, Sarasvatī, Vāc, Araṇyānī, Indrāṇī, Varuṇānī, Śacī, Rodasī, Sītā, Urvarā, Araṇi, Śraddhā, Dhiṣaṇā, Iḷā, Nirṛiti, Sūnṛitā Śrī, Sūryā etc. A few more are added to this list in the later Vedic literature, which many of them vanish. The conception of these goddesses, as held in the earlier period, changes a bit in the later period. It is really very difficult to trace out the different stages of evolution of the female principle, though not altogether impossible, from the simple conception of agencies of divine powers, manifested in the physical operation of Nature, to the complex and abstract notion of one Supreme *Śakti* with a male counterpart either of Viṣṇu or Śiva, scarcely conceived in the Vedic literature, we can trace the first origins in the hymns of *Ṛigveda*, the contents of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upniṣādas*.[3] As we find much of the 'Maternal Characteristics of the goddess is scattered throughout Vedic literature.'[4] S.K. Das finds some connection between Umā, Durgā, Pārvatī, Lakshmī, etc., and the old Vedic fertility goddesses, such as Sarasvatī, Puraṃdhi, Aditi, etc.[5] And it is only in the final stage of the development of religious imagination that the divinity is conceived as All-Mother—an abstract conception.[6] We must, therefore, take Mother Goddess worship as an outward expression of a mental attitude which encourages the conception of divinity as female and not merely on external facts indicating simply that a number of female deities are worshipped.[7]

With regard to Vedic worship, only a veiled idea of such a conception can be noticed here and there. Otherwise it is full with personification of the different natural phenomena and their worship; those with delicacy, poetic inspiration became goddesses. Taking this into consideration, Uṣas appears to be an embodiment of these qualities. A large number of hymns of the *Ṛigveda* are devoted to her. She is the personification of dawn, a very beautiful and inspiring natural phenomenon. "Uṣas is the most graceful creation of Vedic poetry and there is no

1. Renou, *Religion of Ancient India*, p. 14.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
3. Das, S.K., *Śakti or Divine Power*, p. 7.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
6. *IC.*, Vol. VIII, p. 67.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

more charming figure in the descriptive religious lyrics of any other literature" observes Macdonell.[1]

In the *Ṛigveda*, she has been conceived as the divine virgin. Her representation is lively. She is like a wheel that revolves ever anew.[2] She is responsible for the routine work since she awakes creatures; so she is the breath and life of everything.[3] This is quite natural. Early in the morning with the daybreak, men, animals and birds awake and they begin to move. So the goddess Uṣas is said to awake every living being into motion.[4] Everyday she is said to appear at the appointed place and never infringes the ordinance of order and of gods.[5] She never loses her direction.[6] She renders good service to the gods by causing all worshippers to awake and their sacrifical fires kindled.[7] Sometimes she is also spoken of as being awakened by worshippers.[8] Thus she appears to be a deity serving practical purposes and injecting life into all living creatures.

She is conceived as a most beautiful woman displaying her bosom like a dancer and arraying herself in gay attire.[9] She is a maiden too, and decked by her mother shows her form[10] and unveils her charms in the east.[11] Rising resplendant as from bath, showing her charms, she comes to light, driving away the darkness.[12] Thus she is beautiful, charming and shining.

Uṣas is said to be the preserver of man,[13] goddess of earthly treasure,[14] benefactress of men,[15] preserver of the world,[16] the greatest goddess, producer of food,[17] dispeller of enemies,[18] guide of men[19] curer of diseases.[20] inspirer of five tribes,[21] etc. naturally she appears to have been conceived as a personification of Mother

---

[1] Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 46.
[2] *RV*, 3.61.3.
[3] *Ibid.*, 1.48.5-10; 1.49.3.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1.92.9; *RV*. 7.77.1.
[5] *Ibid.*, 1.92.12; 1.123.9; 7.76.5.
[6] *Ibid.*, 5.80.4.
[7] *Ibid.*, 1.113.9.
[8] *Ibid.*, 4.52.4.
[9] *Ibid.*, 1.92.4.
[10] *Ibid.*, 1.123.11.
[11] *Ibid.*, 1.124.3-4.
[12] *Ibid.*, 5.80, 5-6.
[13] *Ibid.*, 1.12.3.
[14] *Ibid.*, 1, 113, 7.
[15] *Ibid.*, 7, 75-2.
[16] *Ibid.*, 7, 75, 4.
[17] *Ibid.*, 7, 79, 3.
[18] *Ibid.*, 7, 81, 6.
[19] *Ibid.*, 7, 81, 1.
[20] *IIbid.*, 1, 12. 1.
[21] *Ibid.*, 7, 79.1.

Goddess; though the conception of All-Mother, source of all creation was yet to be thought of. It is interesting to note that she is spoken of as the mother of the gods but none among the gods is called her son; only the sun is said to be her son as well as husband and father also.[1]

Uṣas and Sūrya are closely associated because both are manifestations of light and so Agni also gets associated with them. Sūrya and Agni both give heat and light. There is no doubt that Sūrya is more powerful than Agni. Sūrya dispels darkness and comes just after Uṣas' arrival. The Vedic seers thus got a stimulus for their imaginative and speculative genius. As the Sūrya follows Uṣas he is also said to be her lover,[2] at the same time Uṣas is said to open the path for Sūrya to travel.[3] Uṣas also becomes mother of the Sūrya since the latter comes after Uṣas.[4]

Uṣas being the goddess of Dawn is associated with goddess of Night, as her elder sister.[5] As Uṣas is born in the Sky[6] she is consistantly called the daughter of Heaven.[7] But curiously enough she is also called the beloved of heaven.[8] She is not only a sister of Goddess of Night but of Āditya, Bhaga also.[9] The twin gods of early morning are her friends.[10]

Her relationship with Indra is a bit puzzling. Indra is said to have destroyed the chariots of Uṣas.[11] At the same time Indra and Agni are prayed to battle for the 'Stolen Morning'.[12] And they are lovers of Uṣas also, who is footless, since she moves unsupported in the sky.[13] It is not, therefore, logical to presume that the cult of Uṣas so popular in the Vedic period vanished due to her rivalry with the equally popular cult of Aditi and rise of the cult of Indra.

Her description, no doubt, is throughout anthropomorphic consistent with her natural appearance in the sky.[14] Keith, finds that there is a multiplicity of the actual dawn on the one hand and the unity of the goddess on the other hand which runs throughout the conception of Dawn and the poet here and there is inclined to treat each dawn as a separate being; but this tendency is overcrossed by the unity of the substance of the deity.[1]

---

[1] *Indian Culture*, Vol. VIII, p. 75.

[2] *RV.* 1.115.2, Uṣas has also been taken to be wife of sun (*Ibid.*, 7, 75.5) rather all the Dawns, *Ibid.*, 4.5.13.

[3] *Ibid.*, 1.113.16.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1.115.2. Similar to Sūrya Pūṣan has also been taken to be wooer of his mother, *Ibid.*, 6.55.5.

[5] *Ibid.*, 1.124.8.

[6] *Ibid*, 7.75 1.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1.30.22.

[8] *Ibid.*, 1.46.1.

[9] *Ibid.*, 1.123.5, 'भगस्य स्वसा' ।

[10] *Ibid.*, 1.52.2-3.

[11] *Ibid.*, 4.30. 8:—Uṣas is invoked as the mother of Gods and Aditis rival (*Ibid.*, 1.113.19) and on the basis of this rivalry, and destruction of her chariot by Indra, it is presumed the cause of Uṣas disappearance in later period was due to the rise cult of Indra. *IC*, VIII, p. 67.

[12] *Ibid.*, 6.60.2; Griffith, *Rigveda*, p. 629. Griffith says that the Dawns and by it that have been carried away and concealed by Paṇis ot demons of darkness.

[13] *Ibid.*, 6.59.6; Griffith, *Rigveda*, p. 629.

[14] Das, A.C., *Rigvedic Culture*, p. 465.

In the *Ṛigveda* the anthropomorphic representation of goddesses reaches its climax of this charming goddess and in her physical representation; beauty, youth, forwardness and virginity are the few points which attrack our attention.[2] Still she is conceived as Mother from whom her adorers begged riches and desired to be her sons.[3] She is also implored often to bring wealth, children, and to ensure protection and long life.[4] Even fathers are said to be seated in the lap of the ruddy Dawns.[5] Therefore, there is no doubt about Uṣas also being conceived as a Mother Goddess having the qualities of both virginity and motherhood at the same time.

Many scholars have tried to compare and identify this powerful Vedic goddess. She is generally compared to the Aurora of Rome and the Eos of Greece. She might have a parallel here but this cannot lead us to prove any Indo-European cult.[6] Hillebrandit takes Uṣas to be the Dawn of the new year which according to Keith is wholly unsupported by any evidence.[7] Tilak[8] believes in the polar nature of Uṣas and offers so many arguments which are successfully refuted by A.C. Das.[9] Keith further goes to say that the identification of dawn with *Ekāsṭakā* 'which falls in the dark half of the month of *Māgha* and is connected with the Manes' is purely arbitrary.[10] Undoubtedly, therefore, Uṣas represented the most soothing and pleasant hour of the morning which fills all living beings with energy and hope.

Uṣas is called *Dakṣiṇā*[11] and also *Maghonī*.[12] According to Max Müller such comparison is quite degrading and quite unsuitable for a charming theme like this.

---

1. *H.O.S.*. 31, p. 121.
2. *IC.*, Vol. VIII, p. 164.
3. *RV* 7.81.4.
4. *Ibid.*, 1.30.22, 1.48.1.
5. *Ibid.*, 10.15.7.
6. H.O.S., 31. p. 121. L.D. Barneth remarkhs 'Looking at her name from the standpoint of comparative philosophy, we see that the Ushās is closely connected with the Greek EWS and the Latin Aurora. But when we read the literature, we are astonished to find that while the Greek Dawn Lady has remained almost always a mere abstraction, the Indian spirit is a lovely, living woman instinct with the richest sensuous Charms of the East'; Cf. Barnett, *Hindu Gods and Horoes*, p. 18; but no genuine goddess; *Ibid.*, p. 19.
7. *Ibid.*, 31, pp. 121-22.
8. Tilak, B.G., *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* (*1925*), p. 82.
9. Das A.C., *Rigvedic India*, p. 390 ff.
10. *H.O.S.*, 31, p. 122.
11. *RV*, 6.64.1.

    उद् श्रिय उषसो रोचमाना अस्युरवां नोर्मय रूशन्त ।
    कृणोति विश्वा सुपथा सुगान्यभ्दु वस्वी दक्षिणा मधोनी ।।
12. *Ibid.*

Bloomfield[1] interprets this passage differently. He takes *Maghonī* to be a faminine form of Maghavan (the patron of the sacrifice) and solely used as an epithet of Uṣas. He thinks "Uṣas is the patroness of Sacrifice. She is herself the sacrificial fee, because she heralds or wishes in the sacrifical day, after the darkness of the night when both liberal and stingy are asleep.[2] And all these support that Uṣas was a powerful goddess during the *Ṛigvedic* period.

It is really, therefore, surprising that a goddess of so much importance could not become popular with the later Vedic people. Some scholars believe in her metamorphosis into Lakshmī or Durgā or Umā, of the later period. In the later mythology we find Sarasvatī associated with Prajāpati both as his daughter and spouse.[3] The possibility of such a transformation can not be rejected outright. We may draw conclusions about the connections between later Vedic goddesses and the Vedic ones. A process of evolution occurring in the whole domain of Vedic religion and that of later Hinduism may not be a presumption without sufficient evidence. Yet there are views in favour of a complete disappearance of this goddess. Weber and Hillebrandt thought that worship of Dawn died out as Vedic Indians wandered from south to east. In this connection Keith,[4] on the basis of the natural phenomena for the background conception for of Uṣas believes that this must have been in the Punjab. There are scholars[5] who believe in the clash of cults. D.D. Kosambi, observes on the basis of '*Punaḥ Punar jāyamāna puraṇī*' (born again and again *RV*, 1.92.10) that "She survives after being killed can only indicate progressive, comparatively peaceful, assimilation of her as Mother of the Sun, Wife of the Sun, Daughter of the heaven."[6] This is a very complicated question indeed. To see, in the poetic description of the natural phenomenon, the clash of cults, is quite arbitrary. Indra is no doubt taken to be a destroyer of the chariot of Uṣas but he is also described as her lover and also prayed to search the "stolen morning". So it is difficult to agree with the scholar who believes in the clash of cults. Similarly, to say that dawn in the Punjab only inspires people and not in other parts of India, is also not logical. On the contrary dawn everywhere is inspiring and gives comfort and hope. It is hailed in every part of the world and in the poetry of the different languages we get dawn depicted accordingly.

---

[1] Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 69.

[2] Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

[3] *Śatapatha Brāhmana*. 1.7.4; *Maitrayānī Sāṁhitā* IV. 2-12 (the daughter is said to be Uṣas); *Aitaraya Brāhmaṇa* III. 33—we learn that Prajāpati's daughter Dawn or the sky who transformed herself into a female deer, was the constellation *Rohini*. The creator's desire for his own daughter is well rooted in the Vedic and Purāṇic literature; Cf. *Purāṇa*. Vol. I, Jan. 1963, p. 39.

[4] H.O.S., 31-p. 121.

[5] Kosambi, D.D. *Myth and Reality*, p. 64.

[6] *Ibid.*, Kosambi finds similarity between Uṣas and Mesopotamian Goddess Ishtar. He compares Ishtar's descent into the nether region with Uṣas stay in Varuṇa's realm (*RV*. 1.123.8). Tilak has fanastically twisted this reference to derive an Arctic Home for the Āryans. Kosambi further observes that, 'Ishtar may not be the Lady of the Lake like an *Apsara*, but she is, like Uṣas, the Great Mother, and eternal virgin, as well as a hetaera.' (*Ibid.*, 67 f.n. 15). He also says that Urvaśī has reached the status of an Uṣas and this status is that of a Mother Goddess, not a mere Goddess of Dawn, Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Still there is no doubt that this particular phenomenon did not get favour at the hands of later writers, which may be due to the fact that 'people lost much of their poetic fire', hence 'the more poetical details caused more poetical ones to pass into oblivion.'[1] Thus we find that Uṣas lost her excellence and paramountsy in the later Vedic literature and never formed an independent cult of her own, whereas new deities emerged with greater glory and power commanding more reverence. Uṣas being the deity of a dawn, the morning's pleasant but transitory hour, which lasts for a few minutes, is a phase of transition between night and day. Night and day were the only two natural phenomena of vital importance to man. Thus the hour intervening between them could hardly interest the later Vedic sears, who were more advanced in thought and experience. The Vedic Āryans, who certainly lived not in towns like the Indus Valley people but lived in open space on the outskirts of some forest, exhilerated by the pleasure by the morning's cool breeze with fragrance and freshness and soothing comforting light burst out in poetic fantacies. The Sun, no doubt, was responsible for light (day) since its setting made dark (night). But why there was so much soothing light in the morning before sunrise, was really a baffling problem to the *Ṛigvedic* people. And its beauty, charm and transitoriness made them write in plenty. But the more the Vedic people advanced towards agriculture and village life (*i.e.* living in huts), they began to discard the deities which had no practical utility. And in due course her independence was lost and dawn was taken to be an aspect of the Sun. Naturally, in iconography she is given a subordinate place, rather insignificant position, and Uṣa and Pratyūṣā flank on each side of a Sūrya image.

Aditi is another powerful Mother Goddess of the Vedic period. We have seen that Uṣas was a popular deity and conceived as a Mother Goddess, as a benefactress of men and preserver of the gods and their mother also, and though being the mightiest goddess she does not attain anywhere near the conception of All Mother.[2] To agree with Mr Choudhary 'The Mother-Goddess conception may be said to reach its culmination when the abstract idea of the cosmic principle as the source of all creation is conceived as female.'[3] And in the *Ṛigveda*, Aditi is conceived as All mother. She is the Sky; She is the Air; She is the Mother, and Father and Son;

---

1. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Purāṇic*, p. 44.
2. *Indian Culture*, Vol. 8, p. 75.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

She is all the gods and the five tribes; She is whatever have been born and shall be born.[1]

Aditi, therefore, appears to be the greatest goddess of the Vedic period. But it is surprising that no separate hymn is devoted to her, whereas Uṣas had so many to her credit. This shows that she was never invoked as a separate deity and was conceived as Mother of everything. Natuyally her name occurs throughout the collection. She is the only goddess mentioned by name in the *Ṛigveda*, as the mother of the gods.[2] We come across many conflicting statements about Aditi which is quite in conformity with the Vedic tradition and we should be, therefore, careful in picking up the relevant facts.

Many scholars have tried to identify this goddess with some natural phenomenon. Fischel[3] holds her to be Earth. Hillebrandt[4] and Roth[5] takes her as the eternal principle underlying the celestial light of the Sky, thus, in essence, a sort of feminine form of Dyaus. Max Müller[6] thinks that Aditi meant the boundless sky as the expression of visible infinity. Wallis[7] and Oldenberg[8] think that Aditi denotes simply freedom from bondage. Oldenberg also regards Aditi as a cow and gods to be cow-born, presuming a tradition according to which celestial gods are the offspring of celestial cow. Keith doubts such a presumption and remarks that 'cow is not a primitive conception, but a secondary view.'[9] However, Keith considers the place of Aditi in the Vedic pantheon to be very remarkable and Aditi according to him is sometimes at least conceived as theriomorphic, which is clearly shown by the fact that in the ritual a cow is addressed by her name.[10] Aditi is also regarded by some scholars as a 'personification of Universal, all embracing Nature or Being'[11] and also 'great power which wields the forces of the Universe, and controls the destinies of men by moral laws; and the idea derives some support from her connection with Varuṇa, whose bonds are so often referred to as affilicting sinners.'[12] Macdonell,[13] however, takes Aditi as the personification of a pure abstraction.

---

1. *RV*, 1.89.10—The word Aditi carries the more philosophic meaning that is 'boundless'. Perhaps the Vastness of her attributes made it difficult to become a goddess to be conceived anthropomorphically. And she was invoked in conjuction with other Gods.
2. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
3. H.O.S., 31, p. 216.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, *SBE*, XLVI, 329.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
10. H.O.S., 31, p. 216.
11. Muir, *O.S.T.*, V, p. 43.
12. *Ibid.*, V, p. 47.
13. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 120.

Aditi is often called a goddess (*Devī*) who is sometimes styled *anarvā* intact.[1] She is the mother of Mitra and Varuṇa[2] and also of Aryaman.[3] She is mother of kings.[4] She is the mother of the powerful[5] and excellent[6] and heroic[7] sons or eight sons.[8] She is once said to be the mother of Rudras, being the daughter of the Vasus and sister of Ādityas.[9] Ādityas are also her sons.[10] In an *Atharvavedic* passage she is invoked as the great mother of the devout, the mistress of *Gita*, strong in might, undecaying, widely extended, protecting, skilfully guiding.[11] Invocation to Aditi along with Ādityas, her sons, shows that her motherhood is an essential characteristic trait.[12] The epithet '*pastyā*'[13] meaning housewife also alludes to her motherhood.[14]

Aditi is also connected with light like the Vedic goddess Dawn. She is bseeeched to bestow light,[15] and her imperishable light is celebrated.[16] She is implored to protect or bless her worshippers, their children, and their cattle[17] and prayed for wealth.[18] Aditi, therefore, appears to be a benevolent deity held in high esteem by the Vedic seers. But she is not conceived in anthropomorphic form like the Vedic Dawn.

Aditi is the mother of Dakṣa, who is son of the Ādityas[19] but in a cosmogonic hymn[20] she is said to be his daughter as well as his mother. Moreover, in other two hymns of the *Ṛigveda*[21] these two deities are connected in such a way that Aditi appears to be subordinate to Dakṣa. Macdonell, therefore, rightly observes that 'though Aditi is the mother of some of the leading deities, she plays an inferior part in a few other passages also.[22]

---

1. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 120 of *RV*, 2.40.6 and 7.40.4.
2. *RV*, 8.25.3; 10.36.3; 10.132.6.
3. *RV*, 8.47.9.
4. *Ibid.*, 2.27.7.
5. *Ibid.*, 8.56.11.
6. *Ibid.*, 3.4.11.
7. *Ibid.*, 3.83; 11.1.11.
8. *Ibid.*, 10.72.8.; *AV* 8.9.21.
9. *Ibid.*, 8.90.15.
10. *AV*, 6.4.1.
11. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 120; Cf. *AV*, 7.6.2.; *VS* 21.5.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
13. *RV*, 4.55.3.; 8.27.5.
14. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 121.
15. *RV*, 4.25.3; cp. 10.36.3.
16. *Ibid.*, 7.82.10.
17. *Ibid.*, 8.18.6-7; 1.43.2.
18. *Ibid.*, 7.40.2.
19. *Ibid.*, 2.27.1.
20. *Ibid.*, 10.72.4-5.
21. *Ibid.*, 5.7 and 64.5.
22. Macdonell, *VM*, pp. 121-122; Muir, *O.S.T.* V, p. 47.

The *Ṛigvedic* Aditi, hence, appears to have distinct characteristic of Motherhood,[1] being the mother of a group of gods. Another characteristie of this goddess is her ability to protect from distress and to release from guilt or sin[2], which is in conformity with the etymological meaning of the name.[3] Macdonell in concluding his discussion about Aditi remarks that she 'an entirely Indian Goddess and is historically younger than at least some of her sons.'[4]

In later Vedic literature she has definitely been given a subordinate position. 'She appears in the *Yajuraveda* (*TS* VII, 5, 45; *VS* XXIX.60) once as the wife of Viṣṇu, in the post-vedic mythology she is specially the daughter of Dakṣa and the mother of Vivasvant and of Viṣṇu, but also of all gods.'[5] It may be pointed out that in later Hinduism Aditi is almost forgotten and is not worshipped; no image is found probably because no clear anthropomorphic form was evolved for her, and no clear geographical phenomenon was personified by her. The conception of the supreme Mother Goddess was in an incipient stage as noted in the *Ṛigvedic* Aditi, but it is remarkable that while the idea became a major part of later Hinduism, Aditi herself did not assume that position.

Diti is another Vedic goddess who is associated with Aditi. She is only three times mentioned in the *Ṛigveda*. Mitra and Varuṇa are said to behold her and Aditi from their car.[6] In another passage[7] Agni is besought to grant Diti and preserve from Aditi. In these passages Diti is mentioned with Aditi but in the third passage[8] she is mentioned without Aditi, but along with Agni, Savitṛi and Bhaga. In the later *Saṁhitās*[9] she is definitely mentioned along with Aditi as a goddess. In the popular mythology of the post-vedic period she becomes the mother of Daityas, the enemies of gods. So to some extent the name of Diti as a goddess became antithesis to that of Aditi formed from the latter to express a positive sence, as *sura*-'god'-was later (by false etymology) evolved from *asura* 'demon.'[1] No doubt references to Diti's sons are as early as the *Atharvaveda*.[2]

---

[1] *RV*, 10.63.3—Aditi is called mother who supplies gods with milk, since she is the mother of Ādityas.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 122—Aditi is boundless. Mystical speculation on the name would lead to her being styled as a cow, as representing boundless plenty to her being identified with the boundless earth, heaven or Universe.' p. 122.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 123—Aditi as a releaser from bondage may be due to her sons like Varuṇa and other called 'sons of freedom'—similarly we have *Śavasī* evolved as name of Indra's mother in *RV* itself from the epithet Śacipati, 'Lord of might.'

[5] Keith; *H.O.S.* 31, p. 215.

[6] *RV*, 5.62.8. Sāyaṇa here explains the two as the indivisible earth and the separate creatures on it. Roth as the 'eternal and perishable; cf, Macdonell—*Vedic Mythology*, p. 123;' and Muir 'the entire aggregate of visible nature.' *O.S.T.*, V. p. 42.

[7] *RV*, 4.2.11 Sāyaṇa understands by Diti a 'liberal giver' and Aditi an 'illiberal giver'. Roth takes them to be as 'wealth' and 'penury'. Bargaingne takes the words to designate the goddess of the previous passage.

[8] *RV*, 7.15.12. On the basis of '*Ditiśca dātivāryam*' —Sāyaṇa explains meaniug particular goddess *Ditir api devī*. Roth considers her to be a personification of liberality or opulence. Prof Müller doubts the reading and thinks it was Aditi and not Diti. Cf. Trans. i-244.

[9] *VS*, 18.22; *AV*, 15.18.4; *Ibid.*, 16.6.7.

It appears, therefore, that Aditi and Diti are both closely associated. Muir[3] suggests that Aditi might stand for the whole of Nature as seen by day and Diti by night. Keith[4] on the other hand does not attach much importance to this deity and supposes its derivation from Aditi. Later mythology take Aditi and Diti to be two wives of Dakṣa Prajāpati. In the *Atharvaveda*[5], Ādityas have been given two mothers-Aditi and Diti. It is, therefore, difficult to say whether these two dieties were separately conceived or the one substituted the other. As regards Aditi, the sequence of creation given in the *Ṛigveda*[6] is very interesting and according to it in the earliest age of the gods, the existent sprang from the non-existent and then came the regions from which came Uttānapad and which yielded Earth. Earth led to the birth of Aditi and Aditi to Dakṣa and Dakṣa to Aditi. Aditi is not only the mother of Gods but of the whole universe. It is nothing unnatural to imagine her both as a mother and daughter, since it is very difficult to say who came earlier, whether Universal Father or the Universal Mother. In Egypt Nut is taken to be a goddess, personification of Sky and from all the creatures sprang.[7] Nut was no doubt the mother of the gods but was also the wife of the god of Air 'Shu'.[8] Aditi, therefore, appears to be a Mother Goddess who comprised everything within herself.

Prof Pryaluzki finds for Aditi a prototype in the Great Goddess of the earlier religious phenomena in Asia[9] and goddess Anahita in *Avesta* is connected with Aditi. The Goddess Anahita in *Avesta* is pictured as bearing a bundle of rods and at Rome and Greece flagellation formed part of the ritual of the Great Goddess. And in the *Atharvaveda* Aditi is given the epithet '*madhukaśā*', 'She whose whip is honey' and flagellation is well-known rite to renew the life of creatures.[10] Naturally the two ideas have been united because the whip and honey share the same function of stimulating and renewing life, but the hymn concerned does not hint at this; rather it glorifies *madhukaśā* itself.[11] So it is difficult to prove any connection between these two great Āryan goddesses.

---

[1] Macdonell, *VM.*, p. 123.

[2] *AV*, 7.7.1.

[3] Muir, *O.S.T.*, V, p. 43.

[4] H.O.S. 31, p. 218; *SBE*, XXXII, 256.

[5] *AV*, 7.7.1.

[6] *RV*, X, 72.2.5.

[7] Mackenzie, *Egyptian Myth and Legend*, p. XXXV.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[9] Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 1, 1936, pp. 129-35.

[10] Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishad*, II, p. 342.

[11] *Indion Culture*, Vol. III, p. 721; *IHQ.*, X (1934), pp. 422-423.

Aditi and Aśvins have been taken to be associated and on this basis they are compared with Helen and Dios Kuroi and a regular evolution of the personality of the Goddess Mother is traced from the Cretan representation of the goddess with human supporters in lieu of animals. And it is claimed that we are to see in Greek Art a gradual development from a potnia thereon to a potnia hippon, and finally to the goddess supported by two cavaliers.[1] Keith.[2] however, points out that the *Ṛigveda* is silent on the association of Aśvins and Aditi and only Sūrya is associated with them.

Aditi, therefore, appears to be purely an abstract conception. Though she was conceived as All Mother but she was never elevated to that rank to form a Cult as we find in the case of Uṣas and her anthropomorphic conception was yet to be realised in the later mythology. And Diti, no doubt, conceived as a female goddess but she was also never favoured by the *Ṛigvedic* seers or even in the later mythology rather she became mother of Daityas. But originally she did not possess a malevolent character.

Among many other goddesses Rātrī (Night)[3] has also been personified as a goddess in the Vedic period. Her personification is quite logical. When Dawn was personified as a goddess, a similar treatment to night was not unexpected. But Night could not succeed in inspiring Vedic seers so much as Dawn did, simply because Night does not have beauty. She is, however, conceived as a sister of Dawn. She represents dark but starlit night.[4] The pitch dark night without star must have been dreadful to the vedic people, so the dark sky with stars gave some solace to the awe-striken people and so she is a goddess with her many eyes with all her glories.[5] She is, therefore, conqueror of light too.[6] She is definitely a Mother Goddess since *Atharvaveda* clearly addresses her, 'Mother Night'[7] conceived as 'youthful maiden'[8] and 'Mother of frost.'[9] Though she is a goddess of dark night, but she has a benevolent character.

The vedic seers not only conceived dark Night as a Mother Goddess but Misfortune, and Corruption, Decay and Destruction were personified as goddess Nirṛiti.[10] Arāti is another goddess of this nature known from the *Atharvaveda*.[11] In the *Ṛigveda* also she has been mentioned twelve times as a goddess of disease,

---

1. *Indian Culture*, Vol. III, p. 722—This view has been expressed by Mr. M.Ch. Picard as quoted in the article by A.B. Keith.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 722.
3. *RV*, 10.127.
4. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 124.
5. *RV*, 10.127.1; Max Müller, *The Vedas*, p. 77.
6. *Ibid.*, 10.127.2.
7. *AV*, 19.48.2.
8. *Ibid*, 19.49.1.
9. *Ibid.*, 19.49.5.
10. *Ibid.*, 1.31.2; Griffith, *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*, I, p. 36.
11. *Ibid.*, Grifith p. 199.

dissolution, presiding over death.[1] But their representations do not give us any concrete idea about all their attributes as a Mother Goddess.

Ilā is a powerful goddess in the *Ṛigveda*. She is associated with Urvaśī and and rivers.[2] She is here said to be the mother of *herds*. Sāyaṇa takes her to be Earth. Dowson thinks Iḍā of the *Ṛigveda* to be food refreshment or a liberation of milk; thence a stream of praise personified the Goddess of speech.[3] Macdonell also takes her to be a personification of offering of milk and butter and thus representing plenty derived from the cow.[4] The *Śatapatha Brāhamaṇa*[5] in an interesting story accounts for her birth, from clarified butter, sour milk, whey curds and water thrown into water after the great flood when whole mankind was drowned, as a Universal Mother. Keith[6] also thinks Iḷā to be actual sacrificial food. Agni and Purunavas[7] are said to be her sons. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* she is called daughter of Manu[8] and also of Mitra and Varuṇa.[9] She is connected with cow also. But Iḍā, Iḷā or Ilā are the names of Earth Goddess as well as the Cow goddess.[10] In Tamil iḍā means 'clod or Earth' or 'to dig out' and on this basis Iḍā, Ilā or Iḷā have been taken to be of non-Āryan origin. Hewitt,[11] however, has another suggestion to offer. He takes her to be not an Āryan but an Akkadian goddess and connects her with irw *i.e.*, the Sacred Bull and points out that the Greeks had a goddess 'Iḍa'[12] and Roman 'Ideas' who were 'mother mountain.' Iḍā, undoubtedly is an important goddess and also a Universal Mother but her conception as a powerful mother goddess is lacking. About her connections with similar goddesses outside India nothing conclusive can be said. Iḍā forms a triad with Sarasvatī and Mahī or Bhāratī. Bṛihaddivā is another goddess associated with[13] her and addressed as mother.[14]

Sarasvatī is, essentially, river goddess but taken in high esteem by the Vedic seers. She is both celebrated as a river and a deity.[15] Her association with Ilā and Bhāratī was variously been interpreted. Some commentators consider these three goddesses representing three aspects of the same goddess speech[1] and her character as a river goddess is never completely separated from her abstract intellectual nature.[2] She has been said to be great among the great and most active among the active and is implored not to withhold her milk.[3] She is one of the mothers of streams,[4] and she is the best of mothers, of rivers, and of goddesses.[5] Her breasts are unfailing[6] which yield riches of every kind.[7] As a mother she grants renown to the unrenowned.[8] But to her worshippers she affords protection and conquers their enemies.[9] At the same time she is terrible when she destroys the revilers of gods.[10] In the Vedas Sarasvatī has thus been conceived in two forms—*saumya* and *ghora*, mild and awful.[11]

---

[1] Macdonell, *VM*, p. 120.

[2] *RV*, 5.41.19.

[3] Dowson, *A classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*.

[4] Macdonell, *VM*, p. 124. She is called butter-handed. Cf. *RV*. 7.16.8; and butter-footed Cf. *RV*. 10.70.8.

[5] *SB*, I, 8.7.9; JRAS, 1890, p. 319 ff.

[6] H.O.S., 31, p. 200.

[7] *RV*, 10.95.18.

[8] *SB*, I-8-18; II.5.3-5.

[9] *Ibid.*, I.8.1.27; 14.9.4.

[10] *RV*, 3.1.23; 5.41.19; *AB* I.58; *Nighanṭuka* i.1; cf. *RV* 3.29.3; *SB* I.8.1.19; JRAS 1890 p. 344.

[11] *JRAS*, 1890, p. 356 Note 2 and 3.

[12] Iḍa, Sarasvatī and Bhāratī are called in *Yajurveda* as the wives of Indra.

[13] *RV*, 2.34.4; 5.41.19. She is also associated with Sarasvati.

[14] *Ibid.*, 5.42.12.

[15] *Nir.*, ii, 23.

In the *Ṛigveda* Sarasvatī does not appear to be anything more than a river goddess but in the *Brāhmaṇas*[12] she is identified with goddess of speech, *Vāc* and consequently in the post-Vedic mythology she became the goddess of eloquence and wisdom and subsequently became the wife of Brahmā. The transition from the earlier to the later conception can be found in the *Vājasneyī Saṁhitā*[13] when Sarasvatī is stated to have communicated vigour through speech (*Vāc*) to Indra. The idenification of the river Sarasvati lauded by the *Ṛigvedic* seers is a controvercial problem.[14] But it is evident that the function as a goddess of learning only comes to her after her identification with the goddess Vāc.[15] The Vedic Seers realised the power of speech. It was only due to the power of speech that human

---

1. *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLI, Dec. 1963, p. 682.
2. Das, S.K., *Sakti or divine power*, p. 39.
3. *RV*, 6.61.13.
4. *Ibid.*, 7.36.6.
5. *Ibid.*, 2.41.16 '*Devitame*'.
6. *Ibid.*, 7.95.2; *AV*, 8.21.17; 9.67.32; 10.17.8-9. 'The cool and transparent and tasteful water of the rivers was frequently compared to the milk of the affectionate mother which nourishes men as their best drink both signified by the same word *Payas*. This tendency of holding the rivers as mothers coupled with a tendency to deify them seems to have been responsible for the origin of the development of the worship of river Goddesses of India. 'Cf. *Great Woman of India*, pp. 55-56.
7. *Ibid.*, I.164-49.
8. *Ibid.*, 2.41.10.
9. *Ibid.*, 7.95.4-6; 2.30.8; 6.49.7.
10. *Ibid.*, 6.61.3-7; She is Vṛitra-Slayer.
11. *Purāṇa*, Vol. IV, No. 1. Jan 1962, p. 59.
12. *SB*, 3.9.17; *AB*, 3.1.10; *O.S.T.*, Vol. V, p. 342.
13. *VAJ. SAM.*, 19.12; Macdonell, *VM*, p. 87.
14. Macdonell takes it to be river Haraquiti mentioned in *Avesta* (*VM*. p. 87). Roth, Grassmann, Ludwig and Zimmer take it to be Indus; Max Müller takes it to be Dṛiṣadvatī (*SBE* 32 p. 60); Oldham takes it to be originally of the Sutudri (Modern Sutlej) and when Śutudrī left its old bed to join Vipasa, Sarasvati continued to flow in its old bed. Cf. JRAS, 25, p. 49 ff.
15. O.S.T., Vol. V, p. 342.

being differed from the animals. Hence they conceived the wonderful phenomenon, with which human beings are equipped, as a goddess and she was named Vāc. Since Vāc has special significance in the evolution of knowledge she was associated with Sarasvatī. It is also not unlikely that the composing of the hymns on the banks of Sarasvatī and chanting them in the *yajñas* or in *pāṭhas* by the Vedic *Ṛisis*, helped in her evolution as a goddess of Vāc and learning.

The Goddess Vāc is a personification of speech and is celebrated in one hymn[1] in the *Ṛigveda*. She is also called the queen of gods.[2] The commentator takes thunder, or *Mādhyamikā Vāc*[3] the voice of the middle region to be the starting point of such a personification. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[4] mentions that Soma was brought from the *gandharvas* at the price of *Vāc* transformed into woman. She is associated with Prajāpati in the work of creation and in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*[5] she is called "the Mother of the Vedas" and "the wife of Indra who contains within himself all worlds". Further, in other *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upanishads*, the idea is more distinctly formulated : Prajāpati was this universe and Vāc was second to him. He associated himself with her sexually; she became pregnant; she left and after producing these creatures again entered into Prajāpati.[6] This conception is further elaborated in the *Purāṇas*.

The status of Sarasvatī was elevated to a very high position, only because she was identified with the goddess Vāc, since speech was the medium of revelation (Vāc, therefore is the mother of the Vedas). Sarasvatī, therefore, came to be equated with divine wisdom—the Prajñāpārmitā of Buddhism and became the wife of Brahmā, the revealer of the Vedas and 'when once the relation between Sarasvatī and speech was firmly established her status as the goddess of learning was definitely secured and she became the mother of the Vedas, and the dispenser of all wisdom and clarity of speech."[7] 'She became atonce the foremost of the mother, the best of their rivers and the greatest of the Goddess'.[8] Her complete identification with goddess Vāc left no use of her original status as a river and naturally we find reference to the disappearance of the river Sarasvatī in the *Brāhmaṇas*.[9] In the

---

1. *RV*, 10-125. In this Devī Sūkta there is to be found the sublime conception of Vāc outlined and to be found in it "One of the greatest and at the same time simplest exposition of the concept of Divine Energy or Shaktī inherent in everything in Gods men and animals, nay in the Universe itself" Cf. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 490.
2. *Ibid.*, 8.89.10-11.
3. *NIR*, 11.27.
4. *AB*, 1.27.
5. *TB*, ii, 8.8.5.
6. Dowson, *A classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, p. 330.
7. *Pathak Commemoration Volume*, p. 39.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
9. *Pañcaviṁaśa Brāhmaṇa*, XX.14.2.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa[1] and in the *Upaniṣads* also Sarasvatī is daughter as well as spouse of Brahmā 'like most mother Goddess, the One Being dividing herself into a duality of male and female, husband and wife'.[2]

S.K. Das[3] finds an attempt at the hands of the Vedic *ṛishis* to unify male gods into one supreme deity as Prajāpati or Viśvakarman and goddesses like Varutri, Dhiṣaṇā, Sarasvatī, etc., under a corresponding supreme female deity, Vāc. In the *Ṛigveda* prajāpati is not actually associated with Vāc for creative purposes but she is certainly regarded as a 'productive principle,' under the conception of a 'cow', yielding nourishment and sustenance.[4] And Prajāpati's association with goddess Vāc for creation purposes is, therefore, a later Vedic conception.

The problem which we face is that how a river goddess when identified with the goddess of speech, assumed all of the latter's qualities and pushed her in oblivion and could never be represented in iconography. And we find the goddess of learning to be Sarasvatī and not Vāc. In the *Ṛigveda* Sarasvatī has an epithet '*Ambitame*'[5] or the 'most motherly' which brings her into close connection with other Mother Goddess of the *Ṛigveda*, as Aditi. Puraṇdhi,[6] etc. S.K. Das presumes, that this could happen, firstly because 'she was worshipped by the tribes along the river as the spirit of fertility, promoting by her abudant water the growth of crops cultivated on her banks, and secondly because she nourished by her full swelling volumes of waters of the small streams which issued from her, just as mother feeds her suckling babies.[7] This conception of motherly attribute is really significant and plays a great part in this post-Vedic period.

Thus a general review of the goddesses Sarasvatī and Vāc, it can be said that Sarasvatī once a river of immence importance to the *Ṛigvedic* people, was spoken of very highly in the *Ṛigveda*. She had played the same role to the people of the Punjab in the *Ṛigvedic* period as Ganges plays in North Eastern India afterwards. Vāc too, on the other hand, being speech personified, was of great importance, it being the very medium of Vedic language. Sarasvatī was supplier of water, the life to the world, whereas Vāc supplied them with the life spiritual in the shape of sacred knowledge contained in the Vedas. Hence both of them were of vital importance to the Vedic people and were later on identified with each other for the proper understanding and convenience. Since Vedas were the creation of Brahmā Vāc had to serve the medium as it was revealed. She, therefore, became mother of the Vedas also. And as she came out of the mouth of Brahmā, she should logically be his daughter too. Similarly for worldly creation, Sarasvatī played the role of a

---

1. *SB*, XIV. 42.4.
2. James, E.O., *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, p. 110.
3. Das, S.K., *op.cit.*, p. 29.
4. *RV*, 8.89.10.
5. *RV*, 2.41.16 'अम्बितमे' ।
6. Das, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 39.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

mother and also having come out of Brahmā, became his daughter.[1] Naturally the two goddesses were conceived later on to be one. Sarasvatī, therefore, in the later period assimilated all the qualities of the goddess Vāc, losing her original character of a river and became a great mother goddess. Anand Swarup Gupta, observes that the Vedas 'have treated Sarasvatī in three aspects : (*i*) as the goddess of impelling and invigorating our speech and intellect, and conferring happiness (*maya*), fame (*praśasti*) and prosperity (*Śrī*) on us, and invoked by the Vedic Seer or *Ṛishi* to the sacrifice, often with the two goddesses, Bhāratī and Ilā; (*ii*) as the river-goddess, also invoked by the Seers sometimes with Indra and other gods; and (*iii*) as the sacred river Sarasvatī rising from the mountains and flowing to the sea with its tributaries, and are included in the group of the famous seven Vedic rivers or *Sapta Sindhus*'.[2]

Not only river but forest also was conceived as a female in the Vedic period and the forest as a whole appears as a deity under the name *Araṇyānī*, the jungle goddess, who is invoked in the *Ṛigveda*.[3] She is the mother of beasts[4] and all sylvan things with stores of food without tillage.[5] The conception of forest as a mother is quite natural, since forest gave food to vedic people in the shape of beasts for hunting, fruits, roots and fuel, hence conceived as a Mother Goddess. And such conception is not wanting in the later mythology. Tree goddess and great goddesses assuming the attributes of the Vedic goddess is fairly common in the later period.

The Vedic people were not only living a pastoral or jungle life but they were cultivators too. Hence they had conceived goddess of agriculture too. In the *Ṛigveda* 'furrow'[6] is personified as Sītā and invoked for the grant of blessings and rich crops. She is loved by Viśvedevas and Maruts.[7] She has been conceived as rich in milk to be drained each succeeding year.[8] She is made subordinate to Indra and Pūshan.[9] Chattopadhyaya thinks that it is due to agricultural economy of the Vedic period.[10] This is but natural. Sītā is the deity of 'furrow' in which seed is to be sown. Indra is said to have directed the action of waters downward.[11] Being a thunder-god and conqueror or of drought and darkness and liberator of water and light, Indra is superior to Sītā. In the *Ṛigveda* and the *Sūtra* literature, she is a goddess concerned with agriculture and shares the work with other goddesses personifying other aspects of agriculture.[1]

---

[1] S.K. Das rightly agrees with Mr. K.F. Johanson 'the mytho-religious conception of mother, sister, and wife generally sprang out of the 'motherly-wifely' conception and frequently overlaps it'. Cf. *Śakti or Divine Power*, p. 40.

[2] *Purāṇa*, Vol. IV, No. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 61.

[3] *RV*, 10.146; Macdonell, *VM*, p. 154; Such a conception was also present in the Indus Valley Civilization.

[4] *Ibid.*, 10.146.1.

[5] *Ibid.*, 10.146.6.

[6] *RV*, 4.57.6.

[7] *AV*, 3.17.9.

[8] *RV*, 1.57.7.

[9] Griffith, *Hymns of the Rigveda*, 8, p. 461. Indra is the holder of Sītā.

[10] Chattopadhayaya, D., *Lokayata*, p. 246.

[11] *RV*, 2.17.5. Sīta appears as the wife of Indra which may be because Indra is called '*Urvarāpati*'.

Rākā and Sinīvālī both appear to be moon goddess. They, along with Guṅgū, Sarasvatī and Indrānī, are invoked in one *Ṛigvedic* hymn.[2] Rākā is a rich and bountiful goddess[3] with a lovely form.[4] Griffith[5] takes her as a goddess presiding over actual day of full moon and apparently associated with child birth. Sāyaṇa identifies her with Full moon.[6] Sinīvalī is a sister of gods, broad-lipped, fair-armed, fair-figured, prolific, a mistress of the family (Viśpati) and is implored to grant offspring.[7] In the *Atharvaveda* she is[8] called Viṣṇu's wife and elsewhere she along with Sarasvatī is asked to bear progeny.[9] Griffith takes her to be the 'goddess of the day of New moon and also of fecundity and easy birth like the Latin Goddess Lucina (Lucna, Luna, the Moon).[10] Kuhū[11] is another goddess appearing in later *Saṁhitās* connected with the Moon. Macdonell[12] takes her to be the personification of new moon whereas Griffith[13] takes her to be the goddess of waining moon presiding over child birth. She is undoubtedly a beneficial goddess[14] and invoked for the grant of wealth and son[15] and described as a queen of gods and immortality.[16] Sāyaṇa identifies her with Guṅgū, a *Ṛigvedic* Lunar goddess.[17] Therefore, it appears that Rākā, Sinīvālī, Kuhū, Guṅgū, personified some aspect of the Moon and are benevolent in character. Though Kuhū does not appear in *Ṛigveda*, she is definitely a Mother Goddess in the later Vedic *Saṁhitās*.

---

[1] H.O.S., 31, p. 186; The conception of agricultural deity is not new. In Indus Civilization also we have a sealing depicting a scene of *Sītā Yajña*. Sītā, Āśā, Aradā and Anaghā are to be worshipped at the furrow sacrifice, the threshing floor sacrifices, the sowing of crop, and the reaping and putting the crop into the barn, *cf. Gobhila G.S.*. 4.4.27.

[2] *RV*, 2.32.

[3] Macdonell, *V.M.*, .125.

[4] *RV*, 2.32.5.

[5] Griffith, *Hymns of the Ṛigveda*, I.p. 299.

[6] O.S.T., V, 346.

[7] Macdonell, *VM*, p. 125; *RV*, 2.32 & 10.184.

[8] *AV*, 8.46.3.

[9] *Ibid.*, X.184.

[10] Griffith, *Hymn of AV*, I, p. 299.

[11] *AV*, 7.47.

[12] Macdonell, *VM*, p. 125.

[13] Griffith, *Hymns of the AV*, 1.p. 348.

[14] AV, 7.47.1.

[15] *Ibid.*, 7.47.1.

[16] *Ibid.*, 7.47.2.

[17] Griffith, *Hymns of the Ṛigveda*, I, p. 299.

Śrī is a *Ṛigvedic* goddess and a regular word for 'prosperity' in the *Ṛigveda*.[1] She is no doubt later on equated with the popular goddess Lakṣmī of the later period, but in the *Ṛigveda* Lakṣmī is used in another sense and not as a goddess personifying good fortune. In the *Atharvaveda*, however, we come across the plurality of Lakṣmī, some good and some bad.[2] Śrī and Lakṣmī are said to be two wives (of Āditya according to commentator) in the later Vedic literature.[3] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[4] gives an interesting account of origin of Śrī from Prajāpati, when he was performing intesnse austerity. After her birth she was standing resplendent and covetous when gods saw her and sought permission to kill her in order to appropriate her gifts. Prajāpati did not allow because males should not kill females, they should, therefore, take from her gifts without depriving her of life. Consequently different gods appropriated different gifts. Thus robbed of her gifts Śrī complained to Prajāpati who asked her to demand them by sacrifice. She did accordingly and succeeded.[5] This story at least signifies that the goddess embodies all the major good things coveted by man. Though Śrī and Lakṣmī appear to be the goddess of plenty, richness and prosperity they were never associated with Viṣṇu in the Vedic period. The *Śrī-Sūkta*, evidently a late supplement (*Khila*) of the *Ṛigveda* describes her as exulting at the sound of elephants (*hastināda pramodinīm*). This definitely was the root from which a conception of Gaja-Lakṣmī (*i.e.* the female figures of Lakṣmī being bathed by two elephants[6]) evolved.

Sūryā is a goddess personifying some hour of the day and is associated with Sūrya, the great master of the day and night. She is his daughter.[7] She is said to have ascended the car of Aśvins.[8] Soma is her wooer and Aśvins groomsmen.[9] She is a maiden indeed[10] married to different deities. She is called Ūrjānī[11] as well. Griffith[12] takes Ūrjānī to be the personification of strength. Thus Sūryā, appears to be a goddess but not of much importance. Some would like to identify her with Dawn, as both are the daughters of Sun and concerns with the morning's grey light.

Pṛithivī, the Earth has also been conceived as a goddess—a great goddess. It is natural to personify her as a diety, since it is the Earth 'whereon man was born,

---

1. *RV*, 8.2.19.
2. *AV*, 7.115.1 Lakṣmī is called Pāpī Lakṣmī.
3. *VS*, XXXI.22.
4. *SB*, XI .43.1. This account reminds one of the birth of Pallas—Athene out of the aching head of Zeus as described in Greek mythological literature; *DHIP*, cf. 371; *Taitt. Up*, 1.4.
5. *JRAS*, 1865-66, p. I.
6. Banerjea *J.N. DHI*, p. 372 (Khitani 2.6, V. 3).
7. *RV*, 7.69.4.
8. *Ibid.*, 1.35.4. 116-17. 118.5.
9. *Ibid.*, 10.85.9.
10. *Ibid.*, 7.69.4.
11. *Ibid.*, 1.119.2.
12. Griffith, *Hymns of the Ṛigveda*, I, p. 162.2.

from which he derives his sustenance and into whose womb he disappears after death, attracted his attention and imagination very early and so was conceived of as a Mother Goddess and in some cases, her cult even developed into that of Supreme mother.[1] 'The Vedic Aryans never lagged behind in acknowledging Earth as a Mother Goddess and she occupies a prominent position in Vedic pantheon. But there is only a short hymn of three stanzas in the *Ṛigveda*[2] and a beautiful long hymn in the *Atharvaveda*.[3] However, she is generally celebrated conjointly with Dyaus though this makes her a bit inferior.

Whatever her status may be, she was definitely attributed with all motherly qualities and hence she was a Mother Goddess of importance. She is called Mother[4] and goddess.[5] She is compared to mother[6] and is prayed to give '*payas*' (*i.e.* the sap of vitality of milk) to men as a Mother. The same idea of Motherhood continues always and when she is prayed for anything *i.e.*, an object of desire or property etc. She is asked to '*duh*' (as a mother yields milk).[7] The Earth-goddess holds the world in her womb (*viśva-garbhā*)[8] and she is the womb (*yoni*) of everything.[9] She is the world bearer (*lokadhārinī*)[10] and *viśvaṁbharā*[11] and its birth place (*janayitrī*).[12] She is a *viśva-Dhāya* (nurse),[13] owner (*viśvaswā*)[14] and supporter (*dhātrī*)[15] and also the keeper (*gopā*), the lady (*adhipatni*)[16] of the whole creation. The non-existent (*asat*) came into existence from her[17] and everything that has been (*bhūta*) and that is to be (*bhavya*) is said to have been born in[18] her. Thus the Earth Goddess was regarded as the source and sustainer of everything, the Creator and the Preserver in one. Similar conception of the Earth Goddess we find in the poems of Homer.[19] In the Vedic period Earth Goddess is identified with Cow-

---

[1] *ERE*, V, pp. 6-7.
[2] *RV*, 5.84.
[3] *AV*, 12.1.
[4] *RV*, 1.72.9, 84.4, 164.33; 10.18.10; AV, 6.120.2; 9.10.12; *TS*, iii.3.22; *VS*, ii.10; ix.19.22; *TA*,ii.6.2; *SB*, V.3.1.4; *SB*, V.2.1.18; II.2.1.21; *A.Sr.Su.* ii.10.21.
[5] *Ibid.*, 4.51.11; *AV*, 6.136.1; *AV*, 14.1.47; *VS*, xi.69; *SB*, 6.62.6.
[6] *Ibid.*, 10.18.11; *AV*, 12.1.10; *AV*, 13.2.5; *TA*, vi.71.
[7] *AV*, 12.17.45.
[8] *Ibid.*, 12.1.43.
[9] *SB*, 4.1.2.9.
[10] *TA*, 12.8.
[11] *AV*, 12.1.6.
[12] *TB*, 3.11.1.6.
[13] *AV*, 12.1.27; *TS*, 4.2.9; *VS*, 13.18.
[14] *Ibid.*, 12.1.17.
[15] *VS*, 13.18.
[16] *TB*, 8.7.72.
[17] *AV*, 4.19.6.
[18] *Ibid.*, 13.1.54.
[19] *Hymni Homeric*, XV (pl. 1.4) quoted in *JRAS*, 1862, p. 330.

Goddess as she is called '*go*'.[1] This identification continued even down to the later Hindu mythology. Such an identification may even be supposed to be pre-Vedic or pre-Āryan *i.e*,, non-Āryan. Though the idea may be non-Āryan but the word '*go*' is certainly of Indo-European origin. This gives rise to a doubt as to why an Āryan word is used to denote a non-Āryan idea *viz.* the identification of the Cow and Earth Goddesses. However, we notice a similar thing happening in Greece. Here the pre-Hellenic Agean religion has at its head the Great Mother Goddess Kybele, the goddess is goddess of black Earth. But in Hellenic period the Earth Goddess is called 'Ge' or 'Gaia' as the Vedic one was called '*go*'. She was also theriomorphised as a Cow. Thus the Vedic Earth Goddess '*Go-Mātar*' is the same as the Great 'Gemeter' or 'Demeter' both being Āryan versions of pre-Āryan Goddesses.

The Vedic Earth Goddess is conceived as also anthropomorphically besides other physical attributes suited to Earth.[2] She had a body (*tanu*),[3] head (*mūrdhā*),[4] chest (*baksha*),[5] back (*pṛiṣṭha*),[6] hand (*hastaṁ*),[7] arm (*bāhu*)[8] and breast, full of milk,[9] etc. Earth, therefore, certainly appears to have been conceived as a goddess with definite form.

Another important point regarding this goddess is that she is no doubt a Mother Goddess but at the same time a virgin too. And the conception of Virgin Mother is primitive. In the beginning human being could not have conceived of creation due to males as they must be ignorant about the part played by male 'sperm' in child's birth and seed in vegetative growth. All they could think was the human mother and the Great Earth Mother responsible for the creation. This idea continued further. The Pṛithvī, therefore, though a mother, the mother of all, was called *yuvatī i.e.*, a youthful maiden[10] and *sajoṣā*[11] *i.e.*, a beautiful or good girl or maiden. The Earth Goddess is thus a maiden girl and still a Mother. She never grows old. She is an immortal 'maiden'. Such a conception is quite

---

1. *RV*, 1.164.9; 1.163.7; *AV*, 9.9.9; *Nigh*, i.1.
2. '*Udvata*' or ascent (*AV*, 12.1.2), *Pravata* or descent (*RV*, 10.30.1), *Saman* or much plain (*AV*, 12.1.2), Hills (AV, 12.1.11) Snowy mountains (*AV*, 12.1.11), Forest (*AV*, 12.1.11), river (*AV*, 12.1.3), etc.
3. *AV*, 12.12.30.
4. *RV*, 10.88.6.
5. *AV*, 12.1.6,26.
6. *Ibid.*, 5 20.6.
7. *Ibid.*, 14.1.48.
8. *Ibid.*, 13.3.25-28.
9. *Ibid.*, 12.1.59. Breasts are visible symbol of productivity and the power of sustaining by suckling of the mother. So the Mother Goddess bear even now, prominent breast. It is notable that the Earth Goddess is described as 'of many streams' (*AV*, 12.1.9) and is asked to suckle (*duh*) '*payas*' in the same verse.
10. Cf. *SAESH*, I. p. 103.
11. *RV*, 8.34.23; *TB*. iii.1.1.12.

natural. Since every year she gives new crops, old trees fall down and new ones grow up, but the beauty of the Earth never diminishes. She is fresh and refreshing everytime one sees her. Moreover, the conception of Maidenhood, 'unmarried mother', is one of the most important features of the ancient non-aryan religious systems. Thus in Greece 'the goddesses Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite, who by the time of Homer, have been adopted (from Aegean pantheon) into the Hellenic pantheon—Athena whole heartedly, Artemis securlarly and Aphordite with reservations all bear names which are not Indo-European', and 'all are primarily conceived as dominant and unwedded, a characteristic only later refined into the conception of virgin chastity.'[1] 'Hera and Demeter have also been worshipped in a maiden and youthful aspect. In Sumer from the beginning to the end unmarried goddesses dominated the vast and complex pantheon.[2] The first kings of Sumer looked upon themselves as born of the virgin 'Mother-Goddess' who later on became Dangal nunna and married Enki.[3] The virgin Mother Goddess is a great favourite of the Semites through the transition from Patriarchy to Matriarchy which led to the early substitution of the goddess by gods.[4]

In the Buddhist representation of the Earth Goddess she has been shown wringing out water from her tresses. Gangoli thinks that 'the imagery of the Earth and her tresses of hair saturated with water can thus be independently derived from the vedic sources without reference to the Buddhist tradition—which itself may have borrowed the imagery from the original Vedic Source'[5] 'she is great, shining and fair, and quickens the earth, by scattering rain from the cloud in which act she appears to borrow an attribute of Dyaus himself. As a matter of fact Parjanya (son of Dyaus) the spirit of the rain-cloud quickens the earth with rain, and the Pṛithivī Devī as the wife of Prajanya, absorbs all the showers of rain that descend on her. From Vedic point of view it may be suggested that the Earth-Goddess will carry in her tresses all the water that descend from the Rain-Clouds, and she could easily wring out any amount of water from her flowing tresses'.[6] The tresses of Earth can be nothing but the network of rivers which are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Almost all the rivers of India originate in the mountains, high like a head and rivers like the tresses of hair appear to be falling downwards. And from these rivers as much water can be wrung out.

In the *Ṛigveda* Dyaus Pitar and Pṛithivī are the original divine pair fashioned from the primeval cosmic waters apparently by god Tvaṣṭṛi, the Hindu Vulcan, and from them Indra was born. It 'was the marriage of Heaven and Earth rather than

1. *CAH*, II, p. 617; Cf. *ERE*, Vol. VI, p. 396.
2. Langdom, *Tammuz and Ishtar*, pp. 4-5.
3. Perry, W.J., *The Children of the Sun*, p. 217.
4. *Cf.*, *ERE*, VIII, 182.
5. *IHQ*, Vol. XIX, March 1943, No. 1, p. 10.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

their personification that was emphasized in the texts, irrespective of the particular divine being concerned in the union.'[1] In almost all the mythologies everywhere, Heaven and Earth are generally taken to be one in the beginning and separated only later on.[2] In the *Ṛigveda* Agni[3] is the holder of Earth and supporter of Sky, Indra keeps them apart and so does Soma.[4] Max Müller quotes an interesting account of this separation that 'Heaven remains far removed from wife, the Earth; but the love of the wife rises upward in sighs towards husbands. These are the mists which fly upward from the mountain tops; and the tears of Heaven fall downwards on his wife, he holds the dew-drops'.[5]

It, therefore, appears that Pṛithivī was conceived as a powerful Mother Goddess during Vedic period and definitely acquired higher status during later period, since we find a powerful hymn attributed to her in the *Atharvaveda*, (*Pṛithivī Sūkta*). Her conception was a bit different from other mythologies and unlike Egypt Earth was conceived in India as female—the Great Mother.

Ambikā is also a Vedic goddess known from the *Vājasneyī Saṁhitā*[6] and said to be sister of Rudra.[7] Rudra is identified with Śiva of later mythology and in the *Vājesneyī Saṁhitā* Ambikā is said *Śivonāma*.[8] Ambikā later on became the wife of Rudra or Śiva.[9] Umā is another goddess associated with Siva as his wife. Her name first of all appears in the *Kena*[10] *Upaniṣad* she is not mentioned as Śiva's wife and daughter of Haimavat, and hence Haimavatī. But in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* Rudra is called Umāpati.[11] So both these goddesses were definitely Mother Goddesses of the later Vedic period and were associated with mighty Rudra who later on himself emerged as a most powerful god, as Śiva.

Umā Haimāvatī imparted knowledge to the mighty gods like Indra, Vāyu, and Agni. It is really interesting to note such a sudden rise of a goddess. We may except some sort of transformation of one time powerful goddess in the *Ṛigveda*.[1] Uṣas in a mountain-born maiden goddess, and so is the case with Umā. Indra and Agni are associated with Uṣas. And in the *Taittirīya*[2] *Āraṇyaka* Umā is regarded as the daughter of Agni. This equation of Umā with Agni brought her into relation with the Brāhmaṇic fire-altar symbolism which was the Vedic counterpart of the renewal rites of the ancient Near East.[3] Rudra and Śiva are taken to be one. The Vedic Rudra becomes Śiva of later Hindu Pantheon.[4]

---

[1] James, E.O., *The cult of the Mother Goddess*, p. 112.

[2] Max Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 90. The Newzealanders believed that they were separated. In Egypt Shu (Air God) separated Nut (Sky Goddess) and Geb (Earth God).

[3] *RV*, 1.67.3.

[4] *RV*, 10.89.4.

[5] Max Müller, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[6] *VS*,—3,57.

[7] *Ibid.*, 3.57—*Tryambaka* is an epithet of Śiva in the later period and of Rudra in the *Rigveda*, (7.59.12) and later Vedic period (*VS*, 3.58; *SB*, 2.6.29), *Tryambaka* means 'one having three mothers.

[8] *Ibid.*, 3.63.

[9] *Taitt. Ar.* x.18—Rudra is mentioned as *Ambikāpati*.

[10] *Kena Upaniṣad*, iii, 11.12; IV.1.2; Hume, R.E., *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 338; 'The Babylonian word for 'mother' is *Ummu* or *Umma*, the Accadian *Ummi*, and the Dravidian is *Umma*. These words can be connected with each other and Uma, the Mother-Goddess, whom Bhrigu is said to have coveted.' Diksit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 59.
On the coins of Huvishka we have *Ommo*. *Cf.* Dikshit S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[11] *Taitt. Ar.*, X, 18.

The commentator (Sāyaṇa) on the *Kena Upanishad* or *Talavakāra Upaniṣad* passage declare that Umā means 'knowledge' and speaks of Umā as the impersonation of divine knowledge.[5] Umā is Haimāvatī and to explain this word we must refer to her another epithet Pārvatī. Rudra is the tempest which rages in the mountains, and his wife, therefore, is properly called Pārvatī, Haimāvatī daughter of Mountain Himavat.[6] Originally, Umā or Pārvatī is not his wife and it is only in the later period when Ambikā and Umā are identified that she became his wife. Otherwise Ambikā is Rudra's sister in the beginning.[7] 'As in Śiva, first of all two gods, Agni and Rudra, are combined, so too his wife is to be regarded as compound of several divine forms and this became quite evident if we look over the names of her epithets.'[8] While one set of these, as Umā, Ambikā, Pārvatī, Himāvatī belong to the family of Rudra, others as Kālī, Karālī, Manojavā, Sulohitā, Sphuliṅginī and Viśvarūpā are among the seven tongues of Agni[9] and the names of Durgī, Vairocanī, Katyāyanī and Kanyā Kumārī appear in the verses addressed to Agni.[10] The name of Durgā is explained by Sāyaṇa to be the same as Durgā.[11]

Here is a difficult passage in the *Ṛigveda*[12] mentioning Gaurī. 'In Vedic symbolism गौरी and गौ are distinguished; गौरी the she-buffalo represents the वाक् of the dark regions of वरुण and गौ, as the cow of the effulgent regions of Indra (इन्द्र). Thus गौरी and गौ both are forms of Agni or *Vāk*, for all speech or sound in pulsating energey'[13] Gaurī is connected with Śiva. Perhaps, it was due to Agni merging with all his associates.

---

1. *RV*, 6.59.6.
2. *Taitt. Ar.*, X.1.7.
3. James E.O., *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, p. 104.
4. Śiva, Śaṅkara, Hara, and Mṛida are added to Rudra as appallatives of Śiva. Cf. *Asvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra* IV.8.19.
5. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 239.
6. Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 424, *Ind. Studien*, I, 287.
7. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 424; *Indische Studien*, I, 287.
8. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 425; *Ind. Studien*, I.287.
9. *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.4.
10. *Taitt. Ar.*, X.1.7.
11. *Indian Culture*, Vol. 8, p, 170.
12. *RV*, 1.164.41.
13. Agarwala, *Sparks from the Vedic Fire*, p. 14.

Another Śiva's consort mentioned in *Taitirīya Āraṇyaka*[1] is Varadā which is more a name of Sarasvatī than Durgā.[2] The hymn of Agni in the second *anuvāka* of *Taitt. Ar.* connects Durgā with a scrifical fire.[3] And in the second verse it is said 'I seek as my refuge the Goddess Durgā, who is of the colour of fire, burning with austerity (or heat), daughter of the Sun (or of fire), who is sought after the reward of rites; adoration to be thy energy, O impetuous (goddess).'[4] Muir thinks that goddess Durgā or Gaurī refer to Nirṛiti, the goddess of evil. Durgā is thus adored 'as if the worshipper turned to the protection, so that Durgā would have arisen out of Nirṛiti.[5] Though originally she might have been a mild deity as she is a protecting fortress (*Durga*) against '*durga*' and '*durita*'. And in the later period true to the characteristics of Rudra and Agni bore a terrific character. The possibility of local or foreign influence[6] in this transformation is not ruled out.

We have examined individual representations of goddess during Vedic period. Now let us examine the female counter-parts of the gods mentioned in the Vedic literature. These are Indrāṇī, Varuṇānī, wife of Rudra, Āgneyī, Sūryā, Saraṇyū, Rodaṣī, Milhusī, Śacī, wife of Vasukara[7], etc. Indramātās are also mentioned and there is one goddess named Śavasī (Vasativarī) who is not referred to as a female counterpart of an god.[8] Though Mecdonell[9] thinks that goddesses 'as wives of the gods' 'play an insignificant part in the Vedas', we have ample evidence to show that this remark does not hold good in the case of Indrāṇī. As regards others Macdonell is correct in his estimation.

Indrāṇī, the wife of Indra is called Śacī and Aindrī (mentioned few times in the *Ṛigveda*), is a most fortunate female whose husband would never die of old age and as *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* says, she was selected among many competing goddesses.[10] Wilkins[11] observes that Indrāṇī is the queen always to continue though kings may come and go and thus she is the wife of all who may successively attain the throne of Indra. She also had a son (Chitragupta) not by natural birth (due to curse of Umā) but by a cow, though she suffered all the natural pains. The term 'never coming old age' may again signify 'prepetual youth' and immortality.

---

1. *Taitt. Ar.*, X, 26 and 30.
2. Muir, *OST*, IV, 428.
3. *Ibid.* IV, p. 427.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*,
6. Muir, *O.S.T.*, IV, p. 428.
7. *Indian Culture*, Vol. 8, p. 68.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 68.
9. Macdonell, *VN*, p. 125.
10. Dowson, *op. cit.*, Muir, *O.S.T.*, V, p. 82.
11. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

We may find here a comparison in the Egyptian mythology. This is the feeder of kings, their mother and wife both. She rather signifies the throne itself. Another kingship is an important institution. Indrāṇī is said to have one who would never die of old age, *i.e.*, she will herself not die of old age and a throne never dies nor the institution of kingship.

In the conception of Indrāṇī S.K. Das[1] sees a fair reaching meaning when he correlates Indrāṇī or Śacī with the very conception of Śakti, which only gets its representation fully in the later Hindu mythology. And truly in the hymns of *Ṛigveda* we do not find any mention of Śakti as a definite creative principle but 'the immense forces of nature, acting in such striking phenomena as floating clouds, thunder, lightning and rain, already influenced the minds of the *Ṛishis*, who were peculiarly open to such impressions of grandeur from without.'[2] The word Śakti about a dozen times, occur in the *Ṛigveda*, mostly in connection with Indra but Sāyaṇa explains Śaktis as 'the power of fertilisation.'[3] *Ṛigvedic* seers used the word Śacī, more than of Śakti, which is a typical Vedic word to denote the 'divine powers' of the gods.[4] In the *Ṛigveda*[5] the śacī of Indra as 'Devī Taviṣī' or the Goddess of Might' who waits upon him as the sun attends the Dawn. As S.K. Das[6] observes that 'Taviṣī' here is nothing but Śacī conceived as Indra's Divine consort or 'Energy as his female counterpart.' The *Ṛigvedic* hymn (56) is also significant because it marks a further development in the process of unifying these different Śacīs of Indra into one Śacī and actually making her divine consort and later on we find that this Śacī 'who was originally nothing but Indra's deeds of power deified, became actually the wife of Indra, Indrāṇī.[7]

Varuṇānī and Agnāyī also occur in the *Ṛigveda* rarely but Rudrāṇī is not found till the *Sūtras*, though she plays a decidedly more important part in the cult than any of the other goddesses.[8] Besides them, Aśvinī and Rodasī are also only alluded to in a few passages of the *Ṛigveda*. They are no doubt not so significant goddesses. Though the wives of the gods (*devānāṃ paṭnīḥ*) are insignificant, we find, prominent places occupied by the spouses of Śiva and Viṣṇu, especially the former in the later mythology.[9]

---

1. Das, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 9-16.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
5. *RV*, 1.56.4.
6. Das, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 12.
7. Das, S.K., *op. cit.*, p. 12; Cf. *RV*, 1.82.5.6; *RV*, 3.53.4; 1.22.12; 2.32.8; 10.86.11, 12. It is interesting to note that Śacī as a Śakti consort of Indra also figures in later iconography. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
8. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 125.
9. Muir, *O.S.T.*, V, p. 345-46.

The conception of female principle, absorbing various functions of gods, representing the productive energies of generation and fertility, corresponding to male 'nature powers' generally termed as Puruṣa, is noticed in the *Ṛigvedic Gnā.*[1] The word occurs with the females goddesses—Sarasvatī, Bhāratī, Varutṛī, Dhishaṇā, Ilā, Puraṃdhi, Aramati, Agnāyī, Indrāṇī and Varuṅānī. The word *Gnā* has been given different meanings by Sāyaṇa. It means the 'rising flame of Agni'.[2] Still Das believes that *Gnā* belongs to the pre-historic stage of thought when male 'nature powers' were beginning to be associated with female 'energies.'[3] Johanson takes *Gnā* to mean generative and vegetative power (*Śakti*).[4]

Śraddhā is out and out a poetic conception of an abstract quality and definitely was a minor goddess. Only one short hymn[5] is devoted to the goddess of Faith, Śraddhā. She has been taken to be Sūrya's daughter[6] and also of Prajāpati as mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇas.*[7] She, therefore, is religious faith personified.[8] Bloomfield[9] explains it thus : 'there is no doubt that faith means the belief in the existence of the gods, and their interference in the life of man.' Śraddhā is no doubt conceived as a female but not as a Mother Goddess in the real sense of the term, though she is said to be dwelling among gods (*Śraddhādevāṇ adhivaste*).[10]

Sūmṛitā is bounty personified as a goddess.[11] Asunitī is the personification of spirit of life.[12] Anumati[13] is invoked for progeny health and happiness and is a goddess no doubt. Griffith[14] takes her to be Favour or Divine grace personified and thinks that as Anumati is a deity connected with procreation the hymn is used in charms to remove sterility in cows. Puraṃdhi is goddess of plenty[15]—Like her Dhiṣaṇā is also the goddess of abundance.[16] Aramati, is compared with Avestan Aramati, the Earth Goddess as well as the Goddess of wisdom.

---

1. *RV*, 1.22.10; 2.31.4; 5.46.2 etc. Das, S.K. *op. cit.*, p. 15.
2. *RV*, 5.43.13, *Gnā gantrīr*.
3. Das, S.K. *op. cit.*, p. 15.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
5. *RV*, 10.15.
6. *RV*, 9.1.6; Griffith, *Hymns of the Ṛigveda* II, p. 269 and *SB*, 12.7.3.
7. *TB*, 2.3.10.
8. Muir *O.S.T.*, V, p. 346.
9. Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
10. Muir, *O.S.T.*, V. p. 347.
11. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 120; *RV*, 1.40.3; 10.141.2; Griffith takes her to the excellence, *Pleasantness*, Gladness, Glory personified. Cf. *Hymns of the AV*. I. p. 279.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 120, *RV*, 10.56.5-6.
13. *AV*, 7.20.2.
14. Griffith, *Hymns of the Atharaveda*, p. 337.
15. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 124, Hillebrandt takes her to be the goddess of activity.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Besides these goddesses, a large number of *apsaras* are mentioned in the Vedic literature. They are beautiful sky spirits and as Goldstucker[1] observes, that, 'they are the personification of the vapours which are attracted by the sun and from into mists or clouds.[2] Whatever their origin may be they appear in the *Ṛigveda* as beautiful female spirits.[3] These *apsaras* are wives of the *gandharvas*.[4] And some of them (those accompanying Gandharva Viśvāvasu) are described as connected with clouds, lightning and stars.[5] In the *Ṛigveda* apyā yoṣā (the acqueous mymph) definitely denotes *apsara*, since she is wife of the *gandharva*[6] in the waters. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[7] the *apsarās* are described an transforming themselves in to a kind of acquatic bird (*ātayaḥ*). It, therefore, appears that the conception of *apsarās* as celestial water-mymphs is quite old and was regarded as the consort of *gandharvas*. In the *Atharvaveda apsarās* in general are called *mātṛināmani*.[8]

D.D. Kosambi[9] thinks that our goddesses had wings at one time, but now the feature is lost in our iconography. He mentions that such characteristics can be seen in the Hittite glyptic,[10] the Burney Lillith[11] and a unique Mesopotamian representation[12] of Ishtar, who is a mother-goddess and a dawn goddess, being also mother sister and wife of Tammuz, the sun god whom she frees periodically from his mountain grave. We do not have positive evidence in this connection and therefore, nothing can be said with certainty.

The conception of Another Goddess in vedic period was not only anthropomorphic, but therimorphic too. Ant it was not only confined to vedic period but even to-day we believe in such a conception. Cow is an object of extreme veneration in India from time immemorial. We call her, popularly '*Go Mātā*. She is symbol of purity, simplicity and sacredness. Right from her milk to her dung is considered to be pure and sacred. Her person is highly venerable. She is equated with Brāhmaṇa and her slaughter is as heinous a crime as a Brāhmaṇa's murder. The terrestrial cow acquired a sanctity in the *Ṛigveda*. She was not to be killed (*RV*, 1.53. 3; 8.90.15; 10.11; *VS*, 13.42.49), rather she was called *aghnyā* 'not

---

1. *ERE*, VI, p. 291; *cf. RV*, 5.43.6; 10.92.4.
2. Muir, *O.S.T.*; V, p. 345; Gold Stricker quoted.
3. *Indian Culture*, Vol. 8, p. 68.
4. *AV*, 2.2.5.
5. *Ibid.*, 2.2.4.
6. *RV*, 10.10.4.
7. *Sat. Br.*, 11.5.1.4.
8. Kosambi, D.D., *Myth and Reality*, p. 70.
9. Kosambi, D.D., *Myth and Reality*, p. 64.—A winged female figure is found depicted on a terracotta fragment discovered from Basarh; and the appearance of wings have been taken by Bloch to be due to the Persian affinities of; *cf.* the Licchhavis *ASI-AR*, 1913-14; p. 116. pl. XLIV; no. 550.
10. *Ibid.*, fig. 2.49.
11. *Ibid.*, fig. 2.46.
12. *Ibid.*, fig. 2.4.C.

to be slain'. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (3,4.1.2.) beef was allowed to be cooked for guests but those eating such a meet would be born again and again on this earth (3, 1.2.21). The cow is useful to human beings and *Rigvedic* Āryans held them in reverence in contrast to Indus Valley people among whom the bull was popular. Macdonell remarks that owing to its great utility on earth, the cow naturally enters largely into the conception of vedic mythology.[1]

Throughout the Vedic literature cow has been identified with many other goddesses. The down streams are personified as cows.[2] She has been addressed as the famous Mother of the wealthy Maruts, that pours her milk.[3] The Heaven and Earth are also addressed as 'Two Mother Cows.'[4] In one of the hymns of *Atharvaveda* Earth, Air, Heaven, and the quarters are said to be cows with Agni, Vāyu, Āditya and Chandra as their respective calves.[5] In another hymn the sacred cow is glorified who is invoked as the preserver of Heaven, Earth and the Waters.[6] As Macdonell observes 'The rain clouds as containing waters, as dripping, moving and roaring, are peculiarly liable to theriomorphism as cows, whose milk is rain.[7] And the bountiful clouds are doubtless the prototypes of many coloured cows which yield all desires (*Kāma-dughā*) in the heaven of the Blest,[8] which are the forerunners of the cow of Plenty (*Kāma-duh*) so often mentioned in the post-vedic poetry.'[9]

The cow, the most decile and domesticated animal, that lives on simple grass and fodder, has far reaching symbolic significance.[10] V.S. Agrawala observes that the mysterious chemistry of the Cow's body converts water into milk. But the cow does not yield milk unless she gives birth to a calf. She is fecundated by the Bull her Sire, and then she calves. Milk is thus the symbol of motherhood. Whenever there is milk there is motherhood. Cow's love for suckling calf becomes concrete as milk...The cow as the symbol of motherhood commands extensive description in the *Ṛigveda*. She is identical with Infinite men, animals, birds, living creatures and plants. The process of generation is of the same pattern for all organic beings.'[11]

Thus cow being the symbol of Mother-hood is closely associated with other Mother deities. In pre-Hellenic Aegean religion the Supreme Mother Goddess (Rhea or Cybele) was theriomorphised as a cow and the cow and calf very frequently of intaglios seem to have typified the goddess's maternity.[12] So we find that

---

1. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 150.
2. *RV*, 1.92.1.
3. *Ibid.*, 8.8.3.1, Griffith equates cow with Prisni, *Hymns of the Rigveda*, p. 242.
4. *Ibid.*, 9.70.6.
5. *AV*, 4.40.
6. *Ibid.*, 10.10.
7. Macdonell, *VM*, p. 10.
8. *AV*, 4.34.8.
9. Macdonell, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
10. Agrawala, V.S., *Sparks from the Vedic Fire*, *Preface*, p. ii
11. *Ibid*.
12. *ERE*, Vol. I, p. 145.

the Homeric Hera, the mother of gods and the wife of Zeus, was a 'cow-faced goddess',[1] and was worshipped as a cow fertilized by Zeus as a bull.[2] In Egypt the Great Mother Goddess Hathor was Cow-headed and a cow was her symbol[3] or incarnation.[4] Temples were built for the Hathor cow. Nut was conceived of a cow[5] and Isis was also called cow-goddess.[6] In India much importance was attached to cows but no goddess is worshipped in the form of cow. In Sumer Ninkhursag, another deity has a cow for her symbol and a cow is found on an early Babylonian Cylinder Seal as a symbol of Ishtar.[7] Astoreth also was identified with the cow-goddess and her very name 'Astoreth Karnan' implies 'the existence of cow-headed Astoreth.[8]

The Earth goddess appears to be identical with cow-goddess. The relation between Earth goddess and the cow or rather cow-goddess is intimate and one of almost complete fusion. The Earth Goddess is called a cow (*Vasā*[9]. *go*[10], *Dhenu*[11]) She is cow by birth (*Janmanā Vasā*[12]). Like Earth goddess, cow goddess is also called Aditi.[13] So cow-goddess appears to be like Earth-goddess who supplies food to human beings. She is milk supplier and cloud is the rain supplier. She is also connected with Indra the most powerful god of the Vedic period. One whole hymn in Rigveda[14] relates how the Paṇis were robbed of their cows by Indra. There is also a reference to the cows of Arbuda[15] and Viśvarūpa[16] being taken away by Indra.

The worship of cow-goddess may have some element of non-Āryan touch in it. Indra, who robbed cows from Paṇis is definitely a purely Āryan god and hence his enemy may represent the non-Āryans, who as they possessed them protected and worshipped them too. But nothing can be said with certainty. On the contrary we find the non-Āryans living in the Indus Valley period preferred bull to the cow. So reverence to cows is purely Āryan.

[1] *JRAS*, 1913, p. 147.
[2] *ERE*, Vol. II, p. 38.
[3] *Primitive Culture*, 11, p. 238.
[4] Marshall, *MIC*, I, p. 340.
[5] *ERE*, V, p. 244.
[6] *JRAS*, 1913, p. 146; *ERE*, V, p. 249b.
[7] *ERE*, II, p. 888b.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Aps.*, XVI, 32.4.
[10] *RV*, 1.164.9; *AV*, 9.9.9.
[11] *AV*, 4.39.2; *SB*, 9.9.2.11.
[12] *MS*, II, 13.15. *Vasā* is a technical term for a cow in her season, fertile and productive, *Janmanā vasā* would then mean a fertile productive youthful cow.
[13] *SB*, 4, 5.8.10.
[14] *RV*, 10.108.
[15] *Ibid.*, 8.3.19.
[16] *RV*, 10.8.8-9.

V.M. Apte[1] has discussed cow-goddess in detail and thinks that though when allegorically described in the *Ṛigveda* the cow represents the waters but if these waters turn out to be nothing, "but the All-pervading cosmic water or watery vapours, in the conception of Ṛigvedic poets, then we have the earliest possible genesis of that reverence for the cow which evoked and deepend later—the reverence for the cow as the 'Mother-Earth', nay, as an epitome of the universe, the reverence which crystallised finally, into an article of faith with the devout Hindus."

The Snake is intimately connected with fertility cult. In the *Vedas* we do not have clear cut mention of snake worship. In the *Ṛigveda*[2] Nāgas are mentioned as *Yātu-dhāna* in the category of *Rākṣas*. In the *Atharva Veda*[3] also serpents are dreaded. Serpent worship as an element of religion is found in the *Yajurveda* and we believe in its vedic origin.[4]

In the end it would not be unfair to say that throughout the Vedic literature, though in the later period more crystallised, the spirit of Mother Goddess worship flows. And in the goddesses of later Hindu mythology, we get more developed form of the Vedic conception making a queer combination with local elements to result into new and different goddesses.

---

[1] *QJMS*, Vol. XLV, No. 1, p. 28.

[2] *RV*, I.35.10.

[3] *AV*, VI.56.

[4] *ERE*, II. 414; Hopkins, *The religion of India*, pp. 72 and 148.

CHAPTER 4

MOTHER GODDESS IN THE POST-INDUS AND PRE-MAURYAN PERIOD

During this period, the *Sutra* and Pali literature afford ample evidence beside archaeological finds. In the pre-Mauryan times fine terracottas, mainly product of folk-art, are the major art specimens helping us to determine the extent of Mother worship their. These compensate lack of adequate sculptures in other media.

The *Sutra* literature brings into light many old as well as new goddesses and their worship. The early Buddhist literature also mentions a number of divine femine spirits and goddesses, but it becomes somewhat difficult to correlate them with the contemporary archaeological finds *i.e.* terracotta figurines and paintings on pottery. It is, therefore, essential to examine the literary and the archaeological materials separately.

The *Kalpasūtras* which are the main literary source of this period aim to provide a succinct and systematic account of all the Vedic sacrifices and customs prevalent at that time while the Brāhmaṇas are aimed to explain the significance of various acts in Vedic sacrifices and to settle ritualistic doctrines.[1] The composition of most of the *Kalpasūtras* may be placed between *circa* 800 B.C. and 500 B.C.[2] It is interesting to note that unlike the *Brāhmaṇas* the *Kalpasūtras* are not included in *Śruti*'.[3] 'The *Kalpasūtras* comprising *Śrauta*, *Gṛihya* and *Dharma sūtras* shed a good deal of welcome light on almost all the important aspects of ancient Indian life, and portray a vivid picture of pre-Buddhistic India.'[4] The *Kalpasūtras* not only mention the deities already known to the Vedic Āryans but a number of new dieties had also been admitted to the Āryan Pantheon by the time of the *Sūtras*.[5]

Ṛigvedic Uṣas appears to have gone into oblivion by this time. Sarasvatī is inherited by the *sūtras* from the religion of the earlier times.[6] Ambikā is a goddess in *Sūtra* period and she is the recipient of oblations at the *Baliharaṇa* ceremony of

[1] Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpa Sūtras*, p. 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[4] *Ibid.*, Preface, v.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 465.

[6] *Ibid.*

the *Gṛihya sūtras.*[1] Śrī, Bhadrakālī and Anumati also get *Bali* offering at this sacrifice.[2] We get so many names of the consorts of Rudra and under several names such as Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇi, Bhavānī, etc. She receives oblations at *Śūlagava* sacrifice according to *Pāraskara Gṛihya Sūtra.*[3] Not only Rudra's consorts but Indrāṇī and Varuṇānī also are mentioned.[4] Sītā, Āśā, Araḍā and Anaghā are mentioned as goddesses in the description of the *Halābhiyoga* ceremony.[5] Among them no doubt Sita is the oldest goddess. She is regarded as an agricultural deity.[6] In the *Kāṭhaka Gṛihya Sūtra* (17.1) and *Mānava Gṛihya Sūtra* (II, 13), the goddesses Hrī, Śrī, Lakṣmī, Puṣṭi, Kālī, Shaṣṭhī, Bhadrakālī and Mahīṣikā are mentioned.[7] Here Śrī-Lakṣmī is invoked by the worshipper in the company of the nāgas and the deities. The association of the goddess with nāga is to be noted. The goddess Shaṣṭhī who became popular in the later period is worshipped in the Sūtra period and is invoked to grant worldly prosperity to the worshipper,[8] which is the function of Lakṣmī or Śrī and curiously enough *Baudhāyana Gṛihya Sūtra*, (III.7.17) takes Ṣaṣṭhī as one of the names of Śrī.[9] It is prescribed that the performance of *Shaṣṭhī-Kalpa* should be celebrated in the night of the *Shaṣṭhī* (the sixth lunar day) of the bright fortnight.[10] Similar to Vedic tradition, in the Gṛihya *Sūtras*, some cases of qualities such as Śraddhā (faith), Medhā (intellect) and *Bhūti* (prosperity) are also represented as goddesses.[11]

Apart from these goddesses we get reference to serpent worship also. Vāsukī is offered oblations at *Bali haraṇa* or *Bhūta-Yajña* according to the *Kauśika sūtra.*[12] *Balis* are also offered to *Yakṣas, Apsarās* and Pṛithvī.[13] Here we find Yakṣas, Apsarās and Pṛithivī grouped together. This shows that Pṛithivī was now no more considered to be a great goddess, rather her position was lowered down. She was brought down and was taken in the category of demi-gods. It is interesting to note that like *Yakṣas*, Pṛithivī also got its representation in the Buddhist art. All these show that the position of the goddess of Earth had gone down. Here we also find the recognition of *Yakṣas* and *Apsarās* who were definitely non-Āryan.[13] Hence, reverance to the Āryan as well as non-Āryan deities at the same time would decidedly give an idea of the assimilation of the non-Āryan elements into the Āryan pantheon. Among the rivers, besides Sarasvatī, Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Dṛiṣadvatī are especially mentioned in the *sūtras*.[1] No doubt cow slaughter is noticed in the *Gṛihyā sūtras* but a slow tendency towards more reverence to cow was increasing.[2]

---

[1] Ram Gopal, *India Vedic Kalpa Sūtras*, p. 466, *cf. Baudhayana Gṛihya Sūtras*, II.8.9. *Agniveśya Gṛihyasūtra*, II.5.3; *Apastamba Śrauta, Sūtra*, VIII.18.1.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 466.

[3] III, 8.10.

[4] *Ibid., cf. Kāṭhaka Gṛihya Sūtra*, 20.2.

[5] *Gobhila Gṛihya Sūtra*, IV, 4.28.

[6] Sītā literally means 'furrow' and at *Sīta Yajña* (Furrow Sacrifice), *Khala Yajna* (threshing floor sacrifice) *Pralavaṇa, Ākhurāja, Pravapana* etc. Sītā along with other goddesses receives oblations, *Gobhila Gṛihya Sūtra*, IV, 4, 26-30; *Pāraskara Gṛihya Sūtra*, II, 13.1.2; II, 17.4.

[7] Ram Gopal, *India of the Vedic Kalpa Sūtras*, p. 467.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid., Cf. Mānava Gṛihya Sūtra*, II, 13.

[11] *Ibid*,, p. 466, also *Aśvalāyaṇa Gṛihya Sūtra*, III, 54; *Sāṅkhāyana Gṛihya sūtra*, IV, 9.3.

[12] 74, 8-10.

[13] Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 391; *Cf. Mānava Gṛihya Sūtra*, II. 12-17.

Thus we find that in the whole extent of *Sūtra* literature the seed of future Hinduism began to take shape. The gods as well as goddesses got reverence at the hands of worshippers. But elaborate glorification of a deity has yet to be done and this we find only perfected in the *Purāṇic* literature, and the *Epics*.

It is very surprising indeed that the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini contains some goddesses who do not find a place in the sūtra literature and are Vedic in character. Ushā is mentioned along with the Sūryā.[3] Besides her Indrāṇī, Varuṇanī,[4] Āgneyī, Vṛiṣākapāyī[5] are mentioned. Here we do not find Pṛithivī alone but in pair with Dyaus. The four names of goddess Pārvatī are mentioned *viz.*, Bhavānī, Śarvāṇī, Rudrāṇī, Mṛiḍānī.[6] V.S. Agrawala observes that some of them (*e.g.* Śarvāṇī, Bhavānī) were the local designations of the one and the same Mother Goddess and others (*e.g.* Rudrāṇī, Mṛidānī) her local epithets.[7] Among most of the goddesses mentioned above many are common to the list of goddesses given by *Sutra* literature, such as Indrāṇī, Varunāṇī Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇī, etc.

The early Buddhist and Jaina literature do not throw much light on the subject. Their whole extent is connected with the glorification of their respective Lords and codification of their teachings, *i.e.*, essentials of their respective religion. However, references made here and there give us a fair knowledge of the subject. We definitely find the fundamental mother concept present all through. Mothers of Mahāvīra and Buddha were divine without doubt since they gave birth to such divine persons, yet we do not find their anthropomorphic worship. In later artistic representation Māyā is seen depicted but her worship as a goddess could not be started perhaps due to the very anti-idol characteristic of these religions. Thus we find that they were divine though they had human form.

It is only from the study of Buddhist Pāli *Jātaka* stories that we get some information regarding feminine worship but certainly nothing specific. The Vedic conception of Mother goddesses, cannot be seen present in these stories, whereas there are a number of references about the 'Tree-fairies' who dwelt in the trees etc.,

---

1. Ram Gopal, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 473—In the *Rigveda* (viii 101.15) also we find explicit mention of forbidding cow slaughter and cow is taken to be Aditi.
3. IV, 1.31, Ushā is represented as independent deity. (iv. 3.31).
4. IV, 1.49.
5. IV, 1.37.
6. IV,1.49.
7. Agrawala, V.S., *India as known to Pāṇini*, University of Lucknow, 1953, p. 357-58.

as a guardian deity that helped human beings. In the *Vessantara Jātaka*[1] (No. 547) there is a reference to a goddess who used to appear in human form. In *Mūga-Pakka Jātakā*[2] (No. 538) there is a description of a goddess who dwelt in the umbrella, and who in a certain previous birth had been mother of Temiya and therefore tried to help him. Another interesting account of the guardian deity is found in *Mahājanaka Jātaka*[3] (No. 539). It is mentioned here that a daughter of gods named Manimekhlā had been appointed guardian of the sea by the four guardians of the world. She was told by them that 'Those beings who possess such virtues as reverence for their mothers and the like do not deserve to fall into the sea—look out for such' and there was an exchange of words between her and the Bodhisattva who was brought to Mithilā in her lap. There is also reference to the sacrifice given to a tree-fairy standing in the fork of a tree.[4] These fairies were subject to rebirth as mentioned in the *Dummedha Jātaka*[5] (No. 50) and when a fairy was reborn in Banyan tree, worshippers gathered around. Besides these fairies, eight and sixteen daughters of gods are mentioned who dwelt in their ocean palaces.[6] These water-nymphs appear to be just like Vedic *Apsaras* who also dwelt in water.

A more clear reference to the conception of Mother Goddess is found in the *Sirikāla Kanni Jātaka*[7] (No. 382). Two types of goddesses are mentioned quite opposite in character. One is malevolent and the other is benevolent. Kālakanni is the daughter of Virupāksha and Siri of Dhataraṭṭha. Kālakanni has been painted as an embodiment of hypocrisy, wantonness, moroseness, envy, greed and treachery. Like Alakshmī, she is a malevolent goddess. Quite opposite to her is Siri, almost similar to Vedic Śrī. It is mentioned that she came just after Kalakanni's departure.[8] She came with raiment and ointment of golden hue and ornament of golden brightness to the door of the presence-chamber, diffusing yellow light, rested with even feet on level ground and respectful. She is the goddess of fortune and luck and wisdom like Lakshmī who dwelt with dutiful men, gentle and friendly righteous, liberal, honest, upright *i.e.* with persons having good qualities. Hence Siri, in true sense represents the Vedic Śrī, later Lakshmi conception, whereas Kālakanni is like Alakshmī. We find them quite akin to the modern conception of Lakshmī and Alakshmī. The goddess Śrī is also mentioned in Sūtra literature.

---

1. Cowell, E.B., *The Jātakas*, p. 246-305.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1-19.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 19-37.
4. *Ayācitabhaṭṭa Jātaka*, (No. 19) and *Baka-Jātaka* (No. 38), Cowell-*op.cit.*, p. 53-54 and 95-97; The conception of Tree-Fairies standing between the fork of a tree is not uncommon. From Indus Valley also we come across a similar depiction.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 126-128.
6. *Losaka-Jātaka* (No. 41), Cowell-*op.cit.*, p. 105-ff.
7. Cowell, E.B., *Ibid.*, p. 165-168.
8. In the *Lakshmī-Pūjā i.e.*, *Divālī* also the goddess Alakshmī is beaten out and goddess Lakshmī is welcomed.

The Earth as a Goddess also was conceived in the Early Buddhist literature. Dyāvāpṛithivī[1] and pṛithivī[2] got mentioned in the *sutras* also. In Buddhist iconography the representation of the Earth Goddess is very popular. In *Digha Nikāya* (*Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta*, iii, 13-19) it is mentioned that the Earth shakes, trembles and agitates on the advent of various significant incidents in the birth and life of Lord Buddha,[3] *e.g.* the Conception, the Birth, the Enlightment of Lord Buddha. When Lord Buddha was meditating for enlightenment, he was questioned by Māra as to who was His witness that he got enlightenment and Lord Buddha pointed towards the Earth. This incident was represented in the iconography later on by the *Bhūmisparśa Mudrā* of the Buddha. This shows definitely that Earth was conceived as a goddess, and could be invoked and called for help when occasion came. But her representation as an independent goddess is doubtful in this period, which could only be achieved in later period and that also in South East Asia.[4] In Siam and Burma both her independent image is kept in ordination Halls perhaps because she performs the function of witness to the donations.[5]

In the *Jātakas* we also get mention of Gaṅgā Devatā, the presiding female deity of the Ganges or rivers in general and represented as the custodian of fishes.[6] It appears that by now Ganges got its due popularity and reverence in northern India. 'Mani Mekhalās' the divinity of the sea who looked over sailors, commanded respect over a wider area.[7] The *Yakṣiṇīs*, the shegoblins were very much dreaded as they by their various snares of beauty, music and smell, taste and comfort, attracted men and made them their pray.[8]

Now coming to archaeological evidence, we have already examined Indus Valley finds. For the post-Indus period the excavations at different places in India bring to light numerous terracotta figurines, some of which can easily be assigned to post-Indus Valley period and pre-Mauryan times. C.C. Dasgupta[1] has discussed the problem of Indian terracotta sculptures in detail. A number of terracotta figurines have been discovered from the excavations and explorations from a large number of sites scattered all over India. Besides these antiquities discovered from Navadā ṭolī, Maheshwar, Nevasa, etc. also throw immense light on the subject. Not only sculptures but pottery designs also help us much.

---

[1] Ram Gopal, *India of the Vedic Kalpa Sūtras*, p. 465.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 390; *In Bali haraṇa*, *Bali* was to be put down to Pṛithvī (Earth).

[3] *IHQ*, Vol. XIX, March 1943, No. 1, p. 1-2; *Pathavi Kaṁpati Saṁkampati*, *Saṁpakaṁpati*, *Saṁpavedhati*.

[4] The representation of the Earth Goddess in independent figures met with in Siam, Burma, and Cambodia. There is the legend in a Pāli work called the '*Pathamasambodhi*' well-known in Cambodia and Siam, but which appears to be unknown in Burma. The legend is thus : When Buddha pointed towards Earth, the Earth emerged from the ground under the appearance of a woman and placed herself before the Bodhisatta as if to say 'O Great Man, I know that thou hast fulfilled the necessary conditions for the attainment of supreme wisdom, my hair is soaked with water poured upon the Earth to ratify thy gifts, and now I will squeeze it out, the Earth squeezed her hair and disappeared. Hence such representation of the Earth Goddess is also iconographically perfected.

[5] *IHQ*, XIX, March 1943, No. 1, p. 7.

[6] Mehta, R.L., *Pre-Budhist India*, p. 323. She is represented on one of the Bhārhut medallions, mounted on elephant-faced makara and holding a goad in her right hand; *cf.* Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bhārhut*, pls. XXXVI; Barua and Sinha, *Bhārhut Inscriptions*, p. 68.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 324—*Assa mukhi Yakkheni.*

Some of the terracotta figurines from these sites are definitely religious in character. In all of them general nudity or semi-nudity is the most important characteristic and we may conclude that they represent female fertility figurines,[2] an early conception of Mother Goddess. They are more or less similar to Indus Valley finds. Some figures are fully nude.[3] Soms female figurines which are winged are bare in the upper body and clothed in the lower body.[4] Some female figurines whose lower body is clothed, upper body is nude and ornamented,[5] some female figurines with child whose upper body is nude.[6] As already discussed while taking up Indus Valley terracotta figurines these figurines can also be safely divided into distinct groups *i.e.*, Divine woman or Ishtar type and Divine woman or Isis type.[7] Terracotta figurines, thus preserved a vast treasure of human culture.

There are also other finds which provide proof the existence of Mother Goddess. The Mother Goddess has also been depicted on the pottery. From Navadā ṭolī (Maheshwar) certain conspicuous examples have been found. On one piece dated about 1000 B.C. naked goddess in relief is found.[8] And on a potsherd earlier than this date, painted group of dancers can be noticed; girls still dance the *hataga* dance in circle, holding hands as shown in the sherd in question.[9] Not only sherds but pot itself as a mother goddess as D.D. Kosambi observes : that The *Kumbha* is itself the Mother-Goddess inspite of the masculine gender of the word. It is known that pre-historic hand made pottery before the introduction of the wheel and mass

---

1. Dasgupta, C.C., *Origin and Evolution of Indian clay sculpture*, p. 125, Taxila, Bhita, Buxar, Vaisali, Patna, etc.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 133, Figs. 56, 57; Coomaraswamy, A.K., Early India terracottas, *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, Vol. XXV. 1927, fig. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 134, Fig. 58; Marshall, 'Taxila', *ASIAR for 1919-20, 1922*, pl. XI, 9.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 134, Fig. 59; Spooner, Patliputra, *ASIAR for 1917-18*, Pt. I, 1920, pl. XVI.3.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 134, Fig. 60; Marshall, Taxila. *ASIAR for 1920-21, 1923*, pl. CVI. 3.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 134, From Nevasa (also almost complete figurine of a mother goddess has been discovered, Cf. Nevasa-1954-56, Sankalia, H.D. page 402, No. 10. A headless figure of a standing mother and child has been discovered Cf. (*Excavation at Maheshwar and Navadatoli*-Sankalia, H.D., p. 202, Fig. 105, No. 1).
8. Kosambi, D.D., *Myth and Reality*, p. 69, Fig. 2.6.b.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 69, Fig. 2.6.a.; Sankalia, H.D. *et. al.*, *Excavation at Maheshwar and Navadatoli*, 1952-53, Page-21, Fig. 15. Type 19F, Fig. 42, Types, 63a, b,c,d.e,f,g, 64, Fig. 49.C.

production, is fabricated by woman. To this day, pots made by hand or on the potter's disc in India are made by woman, and smoothed by men with paddles and a stone anvil block; but no woman is to work the fast potter's wheel in India, so far as I know. In this connection Vaśiṣṭhas birth as mentioned in the *Ṛig Veda* (VII, 83) is worth nothing. He was born of the *apsarās*, the lotus or lotus pond, and also from the seed of Mitra-Varuna poured into a jar, *Kumbha*.[1]

Therefore, she is the Great Mother. It is she who makes all nature bring forth. All existing things are emanations from her. She is the madonna, carrying the wholy child or watching over him. She is the mother of men and of animals too. She continually appears with an escort of breasts, for she is the mistress of wild animals, snakes, birds, and fishes. She even makes the plants grow her universal fecundity perpetuating the vegetative force of which she is the fountain head.[2]

A gold plaque representing a standing nude female figure is quite interesting a find belonging to pre-Mauryan period discovered from Lauriyā-Nandangarh.[3] It stands frontal and is absolutely nude and the sex-organ is clearly indicated. Bloch has identified this figure as Pṛithivī.[4] Almost a similar gold plaque has been discovered from Syria of 13th cent. B.C. bearing the figure of goddess Astarte.[5] The similarity of these two gold plaques, unique of its kind, certainly deserves attention. They might represent the Mother Earth. Coomaraswamy agrees with this identification[6] but also says that it lacks proper evidence.[7] Regarding this figure Keith has remarked that 'The suggestion that the female figure on a gold leaf found in a Lauriyā-Nandangarh tumulus is a representation of Pṛithivī of the eighth century B.C. (C.H.I. Vol. 1, 616) is wholly improved and implausible.[8] However, this figure is definitely not secular and represents a deity.[9]

---

1. Kosambi, D.D., *Myth and Reality*, p. 70.
2. Glotz, *Aeglean Civilization*, p. 245 as quoted in *JUPHS*, July 1936, Vol. IX, pt. II, p. 22.
3. *ASIAR 1906-07 (1909)*, Fig. 4; *C.H.I.*, Vol. I, p. 616.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Neumann, E., *The Great Mother*, plate. 12b.; plate. III.5.
6. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, 1927, p. 10.
7. Coomarswamy, A.K., Archaie Indian terracotta, *IPEK*, 1928, p. 68.
8. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanisad*, p. 68, note-5, 1925.
9. Dasgupta, C.C., *op,cit.*, p. 136, note-1.

CHAPTER 5

MOTHER GODDESS IN THE MAURYA-SUNGA-KUSANA PERIOD

A gradual change in the basis character of the Vedic religion has already been noticed from the study of the vast extent of the literary sources, apart from the archaeological ones, though still held in high esteem. It is, however, from the Mauryan period onward that the archaeological materials grow in abundance, which also show such a development in the religious thought. So far the tradition of art is concerned, the Mauryan and the post-Mauryan periods are considered to be glorious. In this period, the plastic delineation in terracotta figures was more developed and more Indianised.[1] Most probably they were influenced by the West Asiatic elements. Mode refers to a nude goddess of the Mauryan period[2] and remarks that "the nakedness of this goddess contrasts sharply with the Harappan figurines and connects it, on the other hand, with some of the later Western Asian materials, as we know that the naked goddess was favourite in Mesopotamia as also in the countries on the Mediterranean shore in the first millenium B.C."[3] The relationship of India with the West is nothing new. India and Persia were in closer contact since the Vedic age. Both the countries are geographically also neighbourers. Moreover, different occasions for such contacts arose when India was invaded by the Achaemanians and then by the Macedonians. Alexander's invasion paved the way for a regular contact, as a result of which permanent Greek settlements arose on the borders of India, which rather dominated the north-western region. Thus the Hellenic and the Hellenistic ideals and conceptions of art influenced Indian art.[4] The Aryans came to India and settled after vanquishing the Indus Valley people, whose many religious ideas came to be assimilated in the Aryan system by his time. Hence a number of of elements was incorporated into the Mauryan art.[5]

---

1. Dasgupta, C.C., *op.cit.*, p. 139.
2. Mode, *The Harappa Culture and the West*, p. 8, fig. 24.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
4. Dasgupta, *op.cit.*, p. 141.
5. *Ibid.*, Besides "the pre-Dravidian, pre-Aryan, Dravidian, Aryan, Indus Valley, Sumerian, and Achaomanian elements, the Hellenic and the Hellenistic elements enter into Indian plastic art." Cf. p. 141.

We have a number of terracotta human figures of the Mauryan period, besides stone and other types of antiquities for our study. Dasgupta[1] classifies the Mauryan terracotta figurines into two different groups—religious and secular. He observes that there was a widespread cult of female fertility figures. He has classified these fertility figures into two types—the Mother Goddess type[2] and the *Yaksiṇi* types.[3] He points out that the Mother Goddess type figures are all mutilated, but some common characteristics can be noticed in all these examples, *viz.* absolute nudity, over emphasised sex organ, developed breasts, and full blown lotus under the feet,[4] a peculiarly divine stamp.

Nude goddesses appearing on the stone discs from Bhir Mound (Taxila), Hathial (Taxila) and Kosam are worth mentioning. On the stone discs discovered from Hathial,[5] we have four nude female figures alternating with honey-suckle designs engraved in relief round the central hole. From Rajghat also, we have such steatite disc on which we get female figure holding a bird in her outstretched right hand, and also a winged mythical animal, crane and crab.[6] Banerjea finds a comparision between these discs with the pre-historic ringstones on the one hand, and on the other with the *Chakras*, the *Yantras* of the Śāktas, *Viśṇupaṭṭas* of the Vaiṣṇavas and *āyāgapṭas* of the Jainas, and further observes that "their ideological association with the former, *viz*, the *Chakras* and the *Yantras* of the later day Śākta cult, appears to be closer."[7] Marshall also observes that "in these ringstones, which are quite small and used, perhaps as ex-voto offerings, nude figures of a goddess of fertility are significantly engraved with consumate skill and care inside the central hole, thus indicating in a manner that can hardly be mistaken—connection between them and the female principle."[8]

Banerjea points out that from the point of view of the development of the Śakti cult in India, the association of the Mother Goddess of some of these discs with alligator or alligators is also of unique importance and interest.[9] Alligator is associated with the Mahiṣāsuramardinī figure in the Udayagiri cave (M.P.), goddess Chaṇḍī and Rālaketu's pedestal in Bengal and also with the by Umā-Maheśvara relief of South India.[10] It is interesting to note that among animals on the discs

---

1. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
2. *ASIAR*, *1913-14*, pls. XLIII. b and d, XLIV, c and e.
3. *Ibid.*, *1903-04*, pt. XXXIX. 16; *Ibid.*, *1911-12*, pl. XXII. 9, 10; *Ibid*, *1913-14*, pls. XLIII. c, XLV, e, f, *JISOA*, III, 1935, pl. XXXI.
4. *ASIAR*, *1913-14*, pl. XLIV. e.
5. *Ibid.*, 1927-28, p. 66, pl. XX. 7.
6. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 170.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 171. Coomaraswamy takes the Bhir mound discs to be of the early or pre-Mauryan period, representing Earth Goddess; (*Hist. of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 20).
8. Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, I, pp. 62-63.
9. Banerjea, J.N. *op. cit.*, p. 172.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 172; *JBRS*, XXXVII, pp. 178ff and plates.

discovered from Murtaziganj (Patna) belonging to the Maurya-Sunga period, no alligator appears, though nude mother or the fertility goddess appears on five of the twenty-one such discs.[1] Hence in the earlier period, we have a definite proof of the worship of the Mother Goddess.

The study of the Mauryan terracotta figurines presents a close parallelism between these figurines and the known *Yakṣinī* figures in stone belonging to this age and also of the succeding age[2]. Dasgupta[3] finds a remarkable affinity between the one discovered at Bhita[4] and the *Yakṣinī* image called Chulakokā-devatā on the railing pillar at Bharhut of the 2nd cen. B.C., and remarks that without doubt the figure can be identified with the *Yakṣinī* figure. Both of them are associated with the plant motif, which shows the divine character. The *Yakṣinī* cult undoubtedly was prevalent in the Mauryan period. The Didaraganj *Yakṣinī* and the Besnagar *Yakṣinī* have a fundamental similarity that they are nude, and such these figures are out side the scope of the Buddhism.[5] The sensuous female figures represented in the early Buddhist art of Sāñchī do not fit in the philosophy of Buddhism. A.K. Coomaraswamy remarks that, "It is religious in the very sence of the ancient cults of Mother Goddess and fertility spirits not in the sence of great enlightenment."[6] Dasgupta, therefore, concludes that "the *Yakṣinī* type is nothing but a type of female fertility figure and the conclusion of Coomaraswamy presupposes a *Yakṣinī* cult prevalent in the Mauryan age."[7]

One specimen[8] from Basarh belonging to the Mauryan period, deserves attention. It is a circular terracotta disc of which some portions are broken. Within two conentric circles with patterns, three pairs of men and women in erotic attitude are represented. Dasgupta finds here the same spirit which pervades the Mother Goddess and the *Yakṣinī* types.[9] One archaic image of goddess on a terracotta plaque from Basarh[10] of the third century B.C. is worth mentioning. The female figure stands on a lotus pedestal, with lotus buds at her sides. There is no garment over her body but the flowing necklace and the girdle cover the breasts and the sex organ respectively. The most important characteristic of this figure is that it is winged. The figure, already referred to, was found on the gold plaque discovered from Lauriya-Nandangarh. Zimmer observes that, "In general, the celestial beings of

---

1. Banerjea J.N. *op. cit.*, pp. 172-73.
2. Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 150.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *ASIAR, 1911-12*, pl. XXII. 9—It is a half-dancing attitude of female figure under a palm tree.
5. Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 151.
6. Coomaraswamy, A.K. *op. cit.*, pp. 27-36.
7. Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 151.
8. *ASIAR 1913-14*, (*1917*), pl. xliii. f; Some may find in these scenes a wrestling scene and its different poses.
9. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
10. *ASIAR 1913-14*, (*1917*), pl. xliv, i.

India either supported or are carried by their vehicles. On the other hand, in ancient Mesopotamian art winged divinities or genii were the rule. This Indian figure betrays connection with that tradition. That is the sphere from which are derived the wings of our divinities of the west, the Greek victory-goddess as well as the christian angels.[1]" It is difficult to identify this figure due to its wings but certainly this is religious in character. We may, however, find in it the earliest example of goddesss Lakṣmī due to the association of lotus as pedestal and an accompanying object.[2] Coomaraswami[3] believes the existence of a long history behind such types and thinks that they might have been votive tablets or auspicious representations of Mother Goddesses and bestowers of fertility and prototypes of Māyā Devī and Lakṣmī.

From Bulandibagh, a terracotta head of a female has been discovered, having serpentine head-dress, belonging to the Mauryan period, which is taken to be a serpent goddess.[4] The worship of serpent is nothing new for Indian religious tradition, and Vogal has rightly shown that it was in vogue in India and Indonesia from very ancient times.[5]

A figure of a goddess discovered from Ghantasala[6] in Andhra belonging to this period (3rd century B.C.) is taken to be that of Saraswatī by some. In this figure the goddess is associated with swan and she is also holding a noose.[7] We know that swan and lotus are also associated with Brahma, at the same time swan is definitely associated with Sarasvātī in her later representations.

In the Mauryan times, south India was definitely the seat of Śakti worship as Megasthenes in his *Indica* refers to Pandaea ruling over Pandya country, as a daughter of Heracles,[8] Kanyā-Kumārī, mentioned in *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*[9] appears to be a great south Indian goddess. From the account given in '*The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*' (*c.* 60-80 A.D.), the presence of such a goddess cult at the Cape of Comorin is proved, since it was believed in the early Christian era that a goddess once dwelt there and bathed.[10]

---

[1] Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, p. 92-93.

[2] Dr. Banerjee also remarks that laksmi very appropriately across several tines in the sealings dug up at Basarh and Bhita. *cf. DHI*, p. 193. Marshall also observes that '*Śrī-Lakṣmī*' type goes to a more remote age than Buddhism; *The Monuments of Sāñchī*, p. 96 f.n. 1.

[3] Commaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 20-21.

[4] *ASIAR: 1926-27*, (1930), p. 139, pl. XXXId.

[5] See Vogel, *Indian Serpent Lore*, 1926.

[6] Rea, A., *South Indian Buddhist Antiquities*, pl. XXXI.

[7] *JIH*, Vol. XL1, Pt. III, p. 689-90.

[8] Chattopadhyaya, S., *Evolution of Theistic Sects in Ancieat India*, p. 62.

[9] X. 1.7—It is here that for the first time that this virgin goddess of the south is identified with the Śakti of Śiva, *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[10] Schoff (Ed). *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, p. 46.

Dr Chattopadhyaya refers to the classification of the terracotta figurines by Marshall connected with the Mother Cult,[1] and belonging almost to this period, *viz.* (*a*) 'Nude Mother' or 'Earth-Goddess'; (*b*) Female deity standing with full-flowing skirt; (*c*) Female deity standing with bird in the left hand and wearing tight skirt; (*d*) Draped female deity seated with bird in folded arms; (*e*) Draped female deity standing with child on her hip; and (*f*) Male and female standing side by side. He further points out that (*e*) and (*f*) types are not represented pictorially in the finds from Eastern India and (*b*) shows trace of foreign origin.[2] From the study of the Kuṣāṇa coins, he remarks that possibly the Sumero-Babylonian goddess Ishtar-Nānā was gradually making her way into India,[3] and type (*f*) may present the earliest archaeological evidence of a god and his sakti together.[4] Thus in the Mauryan period, according to Dr Chattopadhyaya, there were at least three distinct types of Śākta sects in India; (*a*) "one living in the north-western part of the country conceiving of the Mother-Goddess as united with a Father-God who may be identified with Rudra-Śiva; (*b*) another in the eastern part that laid emphasis on the *yantras* or magic diagrams; (*c*) a third in the Far South where the goddess was conceived of as a Virgin (*cf.* Pandaea of Megasthenes)"[5] That Sītā was worshiped at the time of the tilling the soil is also mentioned in the *Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra* (II.8). We also find mention of Gaṅgā worship in it. Besides, reference to the worship of many goddesses is found in the *Durganiveśa Prakaraṇa.* In the *Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra* it is clearly mentioned that several temples of gods and goddesses were established, such as of Aparājitā, Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Śivā, Vaiśravaṇa, Apratihata, Śrī Madirā.[6] This shows that Aparajitā (Durgā) and Śrī Madirā were being worshipped during this period. We do not know their exact conception. Aparajitā is a form of Durgā and Śrī is surely the goddess of wealth. But there is a controversy about the goddess Madirā. Whether She actually existed is also doubtful. Madirā has been read by some scholars as *Mandira.*[7] The existence of a divinity named Madirā may not be an impossibility. Madirā is one of the names of Vāruṇī, the wife of Varuṇadeva.[8] According to Macdonell, Madirā[9] was also a name of Durgā. It was also a name of the wife of

---

1. Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, 55.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
5. Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57. Dr. Chattopadhyaya finds Śākambharī aspect of the Mother Goddess (Durgā-*Mbh.* VI. 23.9) emphasised in the depiction of nude female figure with plant and vegetable designs around her on some of the stone discs discovered in Murtazigunj mohalla of the Patna city. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
6. Sastri, Ganapati, (ed.) *Kautilya Arthaśāstra*, 2, 4, 25, p. 129.
7. *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra* (Jolly and Schmidt Edition), Part II, p. 16; Sinha, B.P., *Bharatiya kala ko Bihar ki Dena*, p. 95. f.n. 4.
8. Dowson, *Hindu Classical Dictionary*, p. 183.
9. *Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, p. 215.

Vasudeva.[1] We can, therefore, safely presume that the wife of Varuṇa also occupied a prominent place in the Hindu pantheon. She was worshipped along with other goddesses in the Mauryan and pre-Mauryan periods (as evidenced from the *Sūtra* (literature). Brāhmaṇī is also referred to by Kauṭilya as fit to be worshiped and a *mantra* which is to be cited in a magical rite invoking Brahmā and Brāhmaṇī.[2]

The Śuṅga and the post-Śuṅga periods constitute the rich period of the Indian plastic art. Apart from the sculptural reliefs from Sāñchī, Bhārhut, Bodhagayā and Amarāvatī, a large number of terracotta pieces and coins has also been found which give a correct picture of the subject in question. The Śuṅga period is particularly considered to be 'one of the most glorious epochs in the history of the evolution of Indian plastic ideal which was mainly formulated in the post-Indus Valley pre-Maurya age and further developed in the Maurya age.'[3] This age witnessed the domination of North Western India by the Indo-Bactrians and therefore, considerable Perso-Hellenistic influences on the Śuṅga plastic art is not a hypothesis but a historical fact.[4] Still it remains typically Indian though it absorbed these influences.

With regard to the age old fertility figurines, it may be said that during this period as well we get the three types represented. A few examples of the Divine Mother or Isis type have been discovered. Dasgupta[5] points out a few characteristics which give them a religious stamp, *viz.* a peculiar stamp over these figures, nude breasts and child-suckling the breast.[6] A child by the side of the female figure is shown in the example given by Coomaraswamy.[7]

The personified *yoni* or baubo type is also represented as pointed out by Dasgupta.[8] In one example,[9] we find the whole upper and the lower body clothed, but special attention has been taken to show the sex-organ exposed. The other important example is absolutely nude with developed breasts and sex-organ clearly shown.[1] Thus, in all these cases, emphasis has been given on exposed sex-organ, which have been called as personified *Yoni* and Baubo type.[2]

---

[1] Monier Williams, *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 735.

[2] *Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*, (text by Shama Shastri, p. 426). The *Śapta-rātra* Brahmā worship also thus appears to be related to the worship of the Saptamātṛikās of whom the first is Brāhmaṇī, *cf. JBRS*, XXXXV, Pts. 1-4, p. 415.

[3] Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 160.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 173. One female figure from Mathura is interesting. She is holding one breast by left hand and in right she is holding a lotus but near the waist in front. It is very difficult to make out any symbolic significance of this. It may symbolise the child which near the waist as if a child is being carried and holding of brest is symbolic of a feeding mother. She is therefore a Mother Goddess. *Cf. ASIR*, III, 1871-72, pl. xi, fig. d.

[6] *Ibid.*, fig. 87; *ASIAR*, *1936-37*, 1940, pl. xxiv, 15.

[7] Coomaraswamy, Archaic Indian terracottas, *IPEK*, 1928, p. 64-76, tafel. 4, No. 26.

[8] Dasgupta. *op. cit.*, p. 173-74.

[9] *Ibid.*, fig. 98; Coomaraswamy, *IPEK* 1928, fig. 6 on page 93.

In the last type, Divine woman or Ishtar type, certain important common characteristics have been pointed out by Dasgupta.[3] The representation is of a beautiful woman, almost divine in character with upper body bare and without any trace of vulgarity. Hence they have been called as such.

A terracotta figurine of the Kuṣāṇa period[4] is quite interesting and definitely appears to be religious in character, since in place of the head, here we have a fully blossomed lotus with petals falling over the shoulders. The other characteristics are absolute nudity, prominent breasts, deep navel and most realistically modelled and most prominently emphasised sex-organ, which prove the fertility characteristics of such figures and thus represent some type of ideal Mother-Goddess.[5] Marshall identifies this to be the representation of Pṛithivi.[6] It is difficult to say anything with certainty. However, we can safely identify *it* to be a representation of some type of the ideal Mother Goddess.[7] The Mathura terracotta[8] female figure can also be taken to be a representation of Mother-Goddess on the basis of its fertility characteristics. Hence we find a continuity of the Mother Goddess worship, and we can definitely say that, the mother-goddess cult which was in vogue earlier was still prevalent in the Kuṣāṇa period.[9]

The Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa period is quite rich in plastic art and we have ample material to reconstruct the evolution of the Mother Goddess worship. On coins and seals many female figures appear and they give fairly good knowledge of the subject. Moreover, the early Buddhist art of all the four important centres—Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Bodhagayā, and Amarāvati, in their *bas-reiefs*, throw valuable light on the subject. The representation of Śrī Lakṣmī is one of the earliest. The Gaja Lakṣmī concept was also very popular during this period. And several times Lakṣmī occurs on the sealings from Basarh and Bhita.[10] So far her identification

---

1. Das Gupta, *op. cit.*, fig. 90; Coomaraswamy, *IPEK*, 1928, fig. 6, no. 43.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 173-74.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 174; *cf.* Marshall, *ASIAR 1911-12* (1915), pl. xxii, 18; etc.
4. *ASIAR*, *1911-12* (1915), pl. xxiii, 40.
5. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 199; Female fertility figure, *Man*, Vol. xxxv, 1935.
6. *ASIAR*, *1911-12* (1915), p. 75.
7. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 199, fig. 107.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
10. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 193.

in early Buddhist monuments of the four great sites, is concerned, there has been some difference of opinion among scholars.[1]

The Gaja Lakṣmī conception of Lakṣmī got prominence during Maurya-Kuṣāṇa period and continued to hold its position even after that. In this conception she is associated with elephants and also with lotuses. This conception can also be named as Abhiṣeka-Lakṣmī. This type appears to be so popular that it occurs not only on coins but constantly on the seals, the terracottas, and the reliefs at Bhārhut, Bodhgayā and Sāñchī as well. One of the quadrant rail medallions[2] shows the goodess seated on a lotus with two elephants pouring water from two inverted jars.

One terracotta image[3] with figures of elephants standing on each side on a fully blossomed lotus, shows elephants holding inverted jars in their trunks from which water pours over her head. On the tribal coins also this device frequently appears where we find Lakṣmī standing (rarely seated),[4] bathed by two elephants. Some scholars recognise in it the nativity scene of the Buddha.[5] On the coins from Kauśāmbī (3rd century B.C.), some coins from Ayodhyā (1st Cent. B.C.), and uninscribed coins of Ujjaini[6] (2nd-3rd. Cent. B.C.) and also on the coins of alien rulers of northern India like Azilises, Rajuvala and Ṣoḍāsa, we find such representations. The reverse device of some of the copper coins of Maues and Azes,[7] is describecd as 'female figure standing to front between trees'. Whitehead takes to be Bachante among vines while Gardener suspects her to be Maenad between two vines.[8] Coomaraswamy[9] refers to a variety of Lakṣmī in which she is surrounded by flowering stems and growing leaves (Padmavāsinī or Kamalālayā type) and very often holds one of the following stems in each hand.[10] Banerjea remarks that the coin device of Maues and Azes may be a Hellenized version of this variety of Lakṣmī.[1] On the coins of Azilises,[2] on the reverse side goddess Lakṣmī is standing facing on a lotus flower with twin leaves. On each leaf stands a small elephant sprinkling water on the head of the deity and this is in conformity with the conception of Gaja Lakṣmī.

---

[1] Marshall, *The Monuments of Sāñchī*, p. 96. f.n.1; "Some of the Māyā figures on the balustrades and gateways are identical with the familiar type of Śri-Lakṣmī, standing or seated on lotus, which the Buddhists evidently appropriated, along with so many other formulae and motifs from the current art of the period, since it can hardly be doubted that Śrī-Lakṣmī goes back to more remote age than Buddhism".

[2] Marshall and Foucher, *The Monuments of Sāñchī*, Vol. II, pl. lxxv, 9a.

[3] Coomaraswamy, Early Indian terracottas, *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, Vol. xxv, 1927, fig. 7 on p. 93.

[4] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 110.

[5] Foucher holds similar opinion.

[6] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 110; Allan, J., *Catalogue of coins of Ancient India in British Museum*, pp. 131-4, 149, 187, 190-1, 256. Vol. I, p. 135, pl. xiii, fig. 333.

[7] *PMC*, I, pp. 100-101, 122; *BMC*, pp. 70-71, 89.

[8] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 110 f.n. 2.

[9] *Eastern Art*, I, p. 178.

[10] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 110, f.n. 2.

Lakṣmī must have been a very popular deity of Kauśāmbī, where many bankers and traders made their fortune through trade and commerce, since on several moulded fragments of the Śuṅga period, we find a female figure holding creeper or standing on a full blown lotus.[3] A plaque[4] from Kauśāmbī shows goddess Lakṣmī standing on a full blown lotus along with shrubs and petals emerging from tank encircled by a railing. Another plaque[5] (No. 150) shows an ornamented female figure with a female attendent with a *chaurī* standing on the right side. A similar plaque was found at Lauriya-Nandangarh[6] where a lady is shown standing on a lotus under an umbrella and on two other lotuses stand her two attendants. Though it is not known what particular goddess it represents but Majumdar observes that "She may be the Goddess of Fortune; her figure is akin in conception to female deity appearing on some of the coins of Azilises and on the Bhārhut railing."[7] The excavation at Peddabankur (Andhra Pradesh) has also yielded a terracotta seal on which Gaja Lakpuri is depicted.[8] In the sculptures of Sāñchī and Bhārhut we get examples of Abhiṣekna of Lakṣmī represented, which is altogether absent in Amarāvatī.[9] The worship of Śrī or Lakṣmī is taken to be pre-Buddhist, and perhaps *Yakṣī* served the model for the representotion of her form.[10] It is also believed that Śrī was associated with the northern quarter, and Śrīmatī or Sirimā with the southern quarter.[11] Sirimā is the feminine form of Sirimā or Śrīmat, and Barua shows that identity between *Mā* and Śrī or Lakṣmī is maintained even in modern parlance.[12] He further points out that Sirimā or Śrīmā is a word belonging to the same category as '*aṇimā*' and '*laghimā*', all indicating abstractions, popularly known as attributes of the Divinity.[13] The Buddhist texts like *Lalitavistara* and *Mahāvastu* present to us with Śrīmatī and Śrī as two distinct

---

1. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 110, f.n. 2; *cf.* pl. viii, fig. 4.
2. Whitehead, *PMC*, pl. xiii, 332.
3. Kala, S.C., *Terracotta figurines from Kauśāmbī*, p. 34.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 35, pl. xxi.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
6. *ASIAR*, *1931*, pl. xxiv, fig. 16.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *IAR*, 1968-69, p. 2.
9. Sivaramamurti, *Bulletin Madras Government Museum*, New Series, IV, p. 82.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 82, pl. xv, fig. 3. A.K. Commaraswamy has identified Śrī or Laṣmī representation in Amrāvati sculptures and thus it becomes the earliest representation of the goddess known from southern India. He remarks 'it is hard to say where the Śrī-Lakṣmī type should end and that of the yakṣī should begin, *cf. Eastern Art*, i, p. 82.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

12. Barua and Sinha, *Bhārhut Inscriptions*, p. 74.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

goddesses or as two distinct types of one and the same goddess.[1] The Bhārhut representation of Sirimā or Śrīmatī, as shown by Prof Rhys Davids, has a faithful similarity in the modern iconography of south India, while the Bhārhut representation of Śrī, as a goddess seated with two elephants pouring water over her, is the oldest instance of the most common representation of the goddess and her figures, exactly in this form can be bought today in the bazaars of northern India.[2] Banerjea refers[3] to the coins of the Kuniṇḍas where we almost invariably find a goddess standing on a lotus flower in her hand. In this connection he point out the reference made by the *Mahāmāyūrī* (verse 82) to the *Yakṣa* Uṣṭrapāda who was the special object of worship in the land of the Kuniṇḍas. Since Uṣṭrapāda means a being either animal or human, with the feet of a camel. Banerjea observes that if we recognise the *Yakṣa* Uṣṭrapāda in the animal representation on the Kuniṇḍa coins 'the attending female alone may stand for Lakṣmī.[4] The dancing girl on the coins of Agathocles and Pantaleon is taken by Banerjea as *yakṣinī* Aśvamukhī (hesitatingly) whereas Coomaraswamy identifies her as Śrī-Lakṣmī. Gardener[5] finds the city goddess of Puṣkalāvatī on the unique Indo-Scythian gold coin.[6] Banerjea thinks that she may be identified as either Lakṣmī with a lotus in her hand (as suggested by Coomaraswamy) or as Durgā Ekānamśā.[7]

In the early Buddhist art also we may have a prototype of this goddess represented. Besides the representation of Gaja-Lakṣmī, Banerjea refers to a standing female figure of the *Nyagrodha-primaṇḍala* type carved by the Bharhut artists as Sirimā-devatā,[8] and there is a grsat deal of affinity (iconographic) between her and the *Devatās* (Culakokā and others). He identifies one standing female figure found by Cunningham among the rivers of Besanagar as goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī.[9] Hence the above discussion clearly shows that the cult of Lakṣmī, conceived both as free standing figure and *Abhiṣeka* type was fully established during Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa times.

One thing is very significant about this goddess. Since she was goddess of fertility and wealth, she was very popular with the *vaiśya* community, who were custodians of agriculture and trade and were responsible for the prosperity of the society (the third *varṇa* in Hindu society). She was worshipped by all the sections. We do have ample evidence to show that whether right from Buddha's time the goddess was popular with *vaiśyas*. In the *Jātakas* there are a number of references and on the railings of Sāñchī, Bhārhut and Amarāvatī, such names occur in the donative inscriptions. Whereas Sāñchī inscriptions[1] record the gift of merchant Śrīgupta, Amrāvatī inscriptions[2] record the gift of *vaisya* (*vanijasa*) Siridatta (Śrīdatta). On a seal from Basarh[3] also, we get the name of Śrīdāsa. Moreover, the *Bṛihatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira[4] calls the *bilva* tree *Śrī-Vṛikṣa*, auspicious for the *vaiśyas*. Some scholars take back the antiquity of the goddess Lakṣmī to the Indus Valley period. Mackay,[5] associating Lakṣmī and pipal tree (on the basis of the lady figure appearing between the two branches of a pipal tree) thinks that perhaps the goddess Lakṣmī is as old as Indus Valley period. But it is difficult to say anything in this connection. Further on the basis of terracotta figurines with lamps attached to the head dress,[6] some scholars find in the later day conception of *Dīpa Lakṣmī*. This also cannot be substantially proved. The lady figure upside down, as depicted on an Indus Valley sealing from Harappa, can be also identified by some as the earliest example of the goddess Lakṣmī, since she is associated with a plant. Simply on this basis, such an identification does not appear to be logical. She, no doubt, has a remote origin.

---

[1] Barua and Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 75; *cf.* Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 217-221.
[3] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 134.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, p. iii, pl. ix. fig. 7. Gardener describes her as 'a strictly Hindu type'.
[6] *BMC*, p. 162.
[7] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 111.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 374, pl. xviii, fig. 1.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 374; also *JISOA*, 1941, pp. 141-46.

It will not be out of place to mention that the association of Lakṣmī with Nāgas suggests something more than that meets the eye. And one may find in this type her Nāga origin. Lakṣmī and the Nāgas, both are associated with water. The former is born out of water, the latter live in it. Moreover, both have a common trait—fertility. She is no doubt essentially a fertility goddess. Whether she was a pre-Aryan goddess who got absorbed into the Aryan fold is quite difficult to say. D.D. Kosambi takes Nāgas to be the aboriginal tribes on the Aryan periphery and thinks that Bhārata war is based on non-Aryan or pre-Aryan Nāga legend.[7] We cannot ignore such a probability and from these autochthonous tribe, the cult of Mother Goddess might have been taken over.[8]

1. *EI*, II, No. VIII, 47.
2. *Luders List*, No. 1230.
3. *ASIAR, 1903-04*, seal No. 45, 110.
4. *Bṛihatasamhitā*, 58.6.
5. Mackay, *Early Indus Civilization*, p. 58-59.
6. Marshall, *M.I.C.*, I, p. 260; II, pl. 73, 3.4; 75, 21-37.
7. "The whole story of the great Bhāratan War goes back to a lost non-Aryan or pre-Aryan nucleus, for the very capital Hastināpur (Delhi) is synonymons for 'city of the Nāgas', the word Nāga being applied also to the elephant (hastin) perhaps because of the sanke like trunk. Nāga also means 'noble in character' according to Buddhist tradition. Inscriptions (*EI*, 9, 174-8) show that, as late as the 11th century A.D., it was an honour for kings to claim Naga descent. The extraction of history from the *Mbh*. will not be easy because of this mixture. The historical value of the entire *Mbh-Purāṇna* complex is at present negligible, except in small portions confirmed by some other date", p. 123, Kosambi, D.D. —*An Introduction of the study of Indian History*, p. 121-24.
8. *Mahābhāratā* also associates Durgā with such tribes (XII. 218) which supports such an adoption.

The goddess Sarasvatī is also represented during this period. On the railing pillar of Bhārhut[1] we find depicted figures akin to the conception of Sarasvatī. This handsome figure playing on a harp may be presumed to be an early prototype of the goddess Sarasvatī.[2] Barua holds a similar view.[3] One of the earliest figures of this goddess with a book as her emblem was unearthed from the Kaṅkālī Tīlā, Mathura.[4] This sculpture is dated in the first half of the 2nd century A.D.[5] Banerjea has discussed this figure in detail and thinks that the representation is of Sarasvati and probably in Jain setting the further remarks that 'the pitcher in the hand of one of the attendants may symbolise the receptacle of knowledge (*jñāna-bhāṇḍa*) of which she was the presiding deity'.[6]

Not only the consorts of Viṣṇu (Lakṣmī) and Brahmā (Sarasvatī) are represented in this period but Śiva's consort (Umā) also found her due place. On the coins of Huviṣka, Śiva is accompanied by Ommo (Umā).[7] On the coins of Azes,[8] whitehead describes goddess Lakṣmī standing to front with flower in raised right hand whereas Gardner[9] finds a lion besides her and says that she is either Pārvatī or Lakṣmī. Banerjea,[10] thinks that since the forepart of the lion is recognisable in this plate, the representation is that of Durgā-siṃha Vāhinī. On the coins of Azes,[11] goddess is standing with flower on the obverse and humped bull is on the reverse. The humped bull on the reverse definitely connects her with Lord Śiva and she may be the representation of Pārvati. Banerjea thinks that lotus is not the monopoly of Lakṣmī, but the commonest pedestal and some of the female figures on coins with lotus in their right hand may be the variants of goddess Durgā.[12] We find Śiva popular in Gāndhāra region; hence, Ambikā may also have been popular, and in the support of this, we get the reference by Huen Tsang about the shrine of Bhīmā Devī, the spouse of Īśvara Deva (Śiva) in Gāndhāra.[13]

---

1. *Mahābhārta*, *op. cit.*, pl. xvii, fig. 2.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
3. Barua, *Bharhut*, Vol. II, p. 75, 'an early iconic form of the Hindu deity Sarasvati'. Banerjea refers to a Khiching (Mayurbhanj Orissa) sculpture of 10th cent, A.D. to be studied with Bhārhut figure; *Cf. DHI.*, p. 377-78.
4. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 378.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
7. *P.M.C.*, pl. XVIII, fig. 136.
8. Whitehead, *PMC*, Vol. I, p. 129, Coin type No. 30.
9. Gardener, p. 85, pl. xix. 5.
10. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 135, pl. ix, 5. Coomaraswamy recognises in her the figure of Lakṣmī.
11. Whitehead, *PMC*, pl. xii, 308.
12. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 134.
13. Banerjea, J.N.. *DHI*, p. 135-Śiva first of all appears in anthropomorphic form on the coins from Ujjaini (*DHI*, p. 117). It is no wonder *Siva-Devi* conception might have been originally conceived in Madhya Pradesh.

Thus we find all the three principal Mother Goddesses represented; and among them Lakṣmī was widely represented. Sarasvatī was represented on a smaller scale. But Durgā, who emerged as the most popular Mother Goddess, was probably less popular than Lakṣmī during this period. Durgā, who was definitely a deity in the South, was also conceived as a great goddess in the Gāndhāra region. Oesha and Nana are represented like Śiva and Ambikā. And it may be possible that in that region Nana influenced the conception of Indian goddess—Durgā Simhavahinī.[1] And other southern and northern conceptions combined during the later part of this period and emerged as the great Goddess Durgā (as conceived in the *Purāṇas*). In the *Mahābhārata*[2] we get a hint how different goddesses came to be associated with the wife of Śiva. Dr Chattopadhyaya referring to the passages of the *Mahābhārata* (XII, 284, 51 & 31f) observes that, 'the Brahmaṇical thinkers gradually came to conceive of one Great Mother Goddess and the different mother cults of India came to be regarded either as parts of or as identical with that great one'.[3]

So far the position of Mother Goddess worship in south India in the early centuries of the Christian is concerned it is amply indicated in early Tamil literature—the *Saṅgam* classics.[4] In these works many names of śakti appear, *e.g.* Amarī, Kumarī, Gaurī, Śamari, Śūlī, Nīlī, Aiyai, Śeyyaval, Koṛṛavai, Nallāl, Kaṇṇi, Śaṅkarī, etc. The presence of the cult of virgin goddess (*kanyā Kumārī* or *Kumāri*) in south India has also been referred to in the *Periplus*. Koṛṛavai was the next important goddess. She has been called the great Mother of Muruga (*Perumbānāṛṛuppadai*, 457 ff) and Muruga has been described as the son of Malaimgal *Tirumurugāṛṛuppadai*, 258), *i.e.*, Parvatakanyā or Pārvatī.

The earliest Tamil grammatical work mentions Koṛṛavai as the goddess of the region of *Pālai*. The Eyinnār of *Pālai* worshipped her and sacrificed buffaloes at her temple. Her hair was matted, her apparel consisted of skins of a tiger and a cobra and her ornaments included the carved tusk of the boar in the hair like a crescent, strings of tiger teeth, bow, drums, pipes, etc., while stag was her vehicle. She was very much dreaded and her displeasure was our calamity.[1] She has been called as a goddess of victory (in the *Padiṛṛupattu*), Śūlī *i.e.*, the wielder of the trident (in the *kuṛuntogai*), Kānamarśelvi or Araṇyāni (in the *Ahanānuru*,—345, 3-7), kāḍuraikaḍavul (in the *Porunarāṛṛuppadai*), Kādamarśelvi (in the *Manimekalai*) and Kaḍukilal, Kānanadi or Vana-Durga, etc.[2]

---

[1] Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 101—Nana is identical with the Sumerian—Babylonian goddess Ishtar. Omme or Umā is representated on the coins of Huviṣka and in the later period we find that Durgā absorbed many of the traits of the goddess Ishtar-Nana (*e.g.* Lion seat, etc.); it has been assumed that Babylonian goddess became merged in the Mother Goddess of India. V.S. Agrawala, (*IC*, IV, pp. 401f) has pointed out the connection between Nana-Aditi and 'a great Sumerian goddess' whose name is variously given as "Nana, Innanna, Nina, Anunit, Nanai, etc. *Cf.* Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, pp. 45-46.

[2] XII, 284. 51 and XII. 284-31f.

[3] Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 53. The names of Devī as Bhadrā Kālī, Bhavāni, Durgā, etc. are found in the late Vedic works like the *Sāṅkhyāyana and Hiranyakesin Gṛhyaāsūtras* and the *Taittirīya Araṇyaka*. *Cf.* Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 491.

[4] Sircar, D.C., (Ed.) *The Śakti cult and Tārā*; See article of Prof. T.V. Mahalingam entiled, 'The Cult of Śakti in Tamilnad', pp. 17-33.

Śilappadikāram,[3] the great Tamil epic (2nd cent. A.D.) mentions the story of the deification of a human being called Kaṇṇaki into Pattinikakaḍavul, the goddess of chastity. The Chola, Cera and Lanka kings erected temples and instituted festivals in her honour. The Bhagavati temple of Cranganore in Kerala, dedicated to Bhadrakālī is said to have been built between the years 115-125 A.D. by Senguttuvan Perumal, the Ceraking and the goddess enshrined in this temple has only one breast (called *Orraimulaicci*).[4] However, the process of absorption of the *Kaṇṇaki* cult into the Kālī or Bhagavatī cult is shrouded in obscurity. The *Śilappadikāram*[5] refers to the worship of Kālī, as we are told, by Kannaki and her husband Kovalan at a Kālī temple on their way to Madurai̇̄. In this work the names of goddesses like Aiyāni, Aiyai Kumārī, Āpya, Antari, Bārati, Pitāri, Māyavai, Koṛṛavai, etc. also occur. The cult of Durgā is also found in the *Veṭṭuvavari* of the same epic.[6] The worship of manimekalai, the chief guardian deity of the sea and Cintā Devī has been mentioned in the epic *Manimekalai* (2nd cent. A.D.).[7]

Let us now examine other antiquities of the period to get further idea of the subject. The sculptural reliefs at the four great Buddhist centres display many female figures which are definitely religious in character. The dryads of Sāñchī, due to their sensuousness, raise a doubt about their religiousness. But Coomaraswamy observes that 'the intrinsic quality of the early art is realistic and sensuous, and this is only more evident in the case of the dryads, because there the theme is anything but Buddhist. Or if we recognise in this very sensuousness with which the art is saturated, a true religious feeling then it is religious on a plane very far removed from that of aristoeratic philosophy of the Upanisadas and Buddhism. It is religious in the very real sence of the ancient cults of Mother-Goddess and fertility spirits not in the sense of the Great Enlightment.'[8] Havell on the other hand thinks that at Bhārhut and Sāñchi women are represented in a purely naturalistic manner.[9]

Tree goddesses are fairly represented in the early Buddhist art. Most of them are voluptuous tree goddesses or dryads and their posture is quite interesting. They

1. Sircar, D.C., *op. cit.*, p. 19.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
3. *IHQ*, II, 621-22; also see Bhattacharya, N.N., *op. cit.*, p. 59.
4. *Ibid.*
5. XI-XI.
6. Bhattacharya, N.N., *op. cit.*, p. 60.
7. VI-X and XIII-XIV.
8. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indoneasian Art*, p. 36.
9. Havell, E.B., *The Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 91-92.

entwine the trunk of a tree with one arm and with other bending a branch down, and at the same time she gives the trunk near the root a gentle kick. Such a posture is quite remarkable for it is derived from a ritual of foundation. 'According to an ageless belief, nature requires to be stimulated by man ; the procreative forces have to be aroused, by magic means, from semi-democracy. In particular, there is in India a certain tree (*aśoka*) which is supposed not to put forth blossoms unless touched and kicked by a girl or young woman'[1] Zimmer further observe that: 'Girls and young women are regarded as human embodiments of the maternal energy of nature...By touching and kicking the tree they were transfer into it their potency, and enable it to bring forth blossom and fruit. Hence, the goddess who represents the life-energy and fertility of the tree, is herself most aptly visualised in the magic posture of fertilization'.[2]

Marshall[3] takes these tree goddesses or dryads to be descendants of pre-Aryan tree-goddesses whose effigies we find on the Indus seals, and further remarks that this cult along with the Mother Goddesses and Śiva must be reckoned as one of the oldest in India. Marshall also takes the bracket figures to belong to the same class of minor deities as the *Yaksinīs* and *devatās* (Sudarśanā, Culokokā, Sirimā, etc.) sculptured on the balustrades of Sāñchī (second Stūpa) and Bhārhut.[4] We have different names labelled by the side of the individual female reliefs. There are two broad divisions : *Yakṣinīs* and *Devatās*. The *Yakṣinīs are* Caṇḍā (Candrā) and Sudaśanā (Sudarśanā) and the *devatās* are Culakokā (Kṣudalokā), Mahākokā and Sirimā (Śrīmatī).[5] Sometimes it is difficult to classify the figures in the absence of any such accompanying lebels. Banerjea points out to some of these individualistic traits : Candrā standing on a horse-shaped *makara* and holding the branch of a tree and entwining the trunk, Sudarśanā also standing on a *makara* but without tree by her side, Kṣudra-Kokā standing exactly like Candrā but her mount being a very lively *tusker*, Mahā-Kokā also standing in a similar pose but without mount.[6] The figures with wings can also be classed under this type of divinity. The winged nature of female figure definitely 'makes it a figure with the divine stamp'.[7] The Maurya-Śuṅga period presents a number of such terracotta figurines.

In the *Jātakas* we have seen that Gaṅgā-*devatā* was mentioned which suggested the divinity of the goddess Gaṅgā. In the sculptural reliefs of Bharhut also we

---

1. Zimmer, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
3. Marshall. *The Monuments of Sanchi*, Vol. I, p. 129, 'the figures themselves are possible derived from popular religious belief in nymphs and dryads connected with Vegetative fertility'. *Cf.* Sarasvati, S.K., *A Survey of the Indian sculpturc*, p. 68.
4. Marshall, *The Mounments of Sanchi*, Vol. I, p. 129.
5. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 369.
6. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 368-69.
7. Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 177, fig. 96.

notice the probable representation of this godddess. The deity appears mounted on an elephant faced *makara* and holds a goad in her right hand.[1] The association of *makara* with the goddess may be taken to be a proof for the same. The form of *makara* still does not appear to have taken its shape. We find the form of *makara* changing. It is only in the post-Gupta period that it gets its final form.

The serpent worship is well-known in India, and serpent goddess was one of the principal objects of worship. V.S. Agrawala[2] points out to a figure representing Nāgī with serpent hoods which certainly adds to our knowledge. In the early Buddhist art 'serpents genii occur in association with a variety of other devine patrons of fertility prosperity and earthly health'.[3] Every where male Nāgas are popular and hardly female Nāgī is represented as principal deity.[4]

S.K. Sarasvati[5] refers to a controversial piece of 2nd century B.C. now housed in Asutosh Museum of Art, Calcutta, which is taken by Prof Kramrisch as representing the *apsarās* Pañcha-Chūḍā produced at the churning of the ocean, whereas Prof Johnston rejecting her view says that it looks as if we are dealing with the cult of a Mother Goddess. An Indian goddess Māyā is referred to in the *Saundarānanda* of Aśvagosha and in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus*, No. 1280. Goddess Maiyā is mentioned who was invoked as bringing the flood in the Ganges. And from these two references it appears that the goddess was worshipped in the Gangetic valley as a goddess especially associated with rain and fertility.[6] This reminds us to the divinity attached to Māyā in the early Buddhistic sculpture. As Marshall[7] thinks that the figure on the rail pillar (2a) of the Sāñchī Stūpa No. 2, with a lotus bending round her head, may be recognised as Māyā and not as an ordinary *Yakṣinī*, some six-reliefs of Māyā[8] are among the Sāñchī sculptures. In the Purāṇas we find that Māyā is called Lakṣmī. Māyā is Lakśmī because '*Mā*' is the name of Lakṣmī and from her *Karmayoga* '*Yā*' is achieved. Again, '*Mā*' is Lakṣmī and from her *Jñāna-Yoga* '*Yā*' is achieved; hence, Lakṣmī. Such is the explanation given by the *Śiva Mahāpuraṇa*.[9] We may, therefore, assume that the cult of Māyā was popular in the Gangetic plains, as known from Aśvaghoṣa, later on it was amalgamated into the cult of Śrī Lakṣmī and lost its original status, rather she was completely forgotten.

---

1. Cunningham, *The Stupa of Bharhut*, pl. xxxvi. 7; also see Barua and Sinha, *Bharhut Inscriptions*, p. 68.
2. Agrawala, V.S., Mathura Terracottas, *JUPHS*, Vol. IX, 1936, fig. 46.
3. Zimmer, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
4. *AIOC*, 1933, p. 311.
5. Sarasvati, S.K., *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, p. 114.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
7. Marshall, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, Vol. I, p. 185.
8. *Ibid.*, pls. 13, 24, 25, 41, 44 and 56.
9. *Śiva Mahāpurāna*, Vs. 69;

   मालक्ष्मी कर्मयोगो वैयाति मायेति कथ्यते ।
   मालक्ष्मीज्ञानयोगो वैयाति मायेति कथ्यते ।।

During the period *mithuna* figures are also found. The *mithuna* representation may be taken to represent the idea of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti*. The '*liṅga*' in the *Yoni-paṭṭa* may have originated from the same idea, which presupposes an age when people used to worship phallus and vulva as symbolic of the male and the female procreative principles.[1] In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[2] Prajāpati has been described as dividing himself into man and woman and then assumed the posture of embracing each other from which the idea of *mithuna* probably originated. And there are archaeological evidences to show the continuity of the worship of phallus and vulva from the pre-historic times. Dasgupta[3] classified the *mihuna* plaques into three types *viz.* '(*a*) in which man and woman are in the posture of *mithuna* but do dot embrace each other; (*b*) in which man and woman very closely embrace each other; and (*c*) in which conventional figures—male and female closely embrace each other.' We get examples of each type. Dasgupta further illustrates these types with the finds.[4] He thus refers to a terracotta plaque[5] showing one man and one woman standing close to each other. The female figure is absolutely nude. It wears an eleborate head dress, ear-rings, necklace, and girdle. The male figure is also absolutely nude. We have a number of such figures. The second group is illustrated by a figure[6] where a man and a woman fully nude are embracing each other, and the third group is illustrated by a nice but mutilated specimen in which two *kinnaras* place each others arm on each other's shoulders.[7] On a terracotta plaque discovered from excavation at Purana Qila mithuna figure is depicted.[8] In the *mithuna* representation, we find the conception of god represented with his consort (Śakti).

It may be shown that 'the cult of the Mother-Goddess was now gaining importance and there was an attempt on the part of some Śaiva devotees not only to regard her as the wife of the Lord but to get her completely absorbed into their own body.'[9] The conception of Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva may be taken to be a result of such an attempt. The earliest example of the Ardhanārīśvara form belonging to the Kuṣāṇa age (discovered from Mathurā), is a miniature relief.[10] 'Satobaeses refers to an account of an Indian in Syria in the time of Antonius

---

1. Dasgupta. C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 174-75.
2. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanisad*, I-4.
3. Dasgupta, C.C., *op. cit.*, p. 175.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 175-76.
5. *Ibid.*, fig. 91 of Coomaraswamy, A.K. Archaic Indian terracotta *IPEK*, 1928, Tafel 5, no. 27.
6. Dasgupta, C.C. *OEICS*, fig. 92, Coommaraswamy, Indian Arachaic terracottas, tafel 7, no. 45, 1928.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 176, Agrawala, Acquisitions to the Mathura Museum, *cf.* ABI A for 1934, 1936, pl. IV.
8. *IAR 1969-70*, p. 4, pl. XI B.
9. Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 78.
10. *JISOA*, 1937, p. 124, pl. XLIV.

of Emesa (218-22 A.D.) and in that connection makes a striking reference to an image of Ardhanārīśvara[1]'. Banerjea points out to a seal (No. 764 ASI AR-1903-04, p. 152, pl. 2) where the tall female figure (as described by Spooner) is described by him differently, and he finds the left breast of the figure abnormally large in proportion to the right one, with traces of the *Urdhvaliṅga* feature on the front part of the waist and remarks that 'there can be no hesitation about the identity of the figure, it really represents the Ardhanārīśvara aspect of Śiva, in which the left half is that of Umā, and the right that of the god himself[2].' Jacobi sees in it the equality of the rank of the mother goddess with her husband[3]. The *Katha Upanisad* refers to the Prajāpati assuming a bisexual form for the purpose of creation.[4]

There are some other goddesses also represented during this period about whom we cannot say anything definitely. On the coins of Pantaleon,[5] a dancing girl is in oriental costume on the obverse. Gardner doubted it as a strictly Hindu type. Coomaraswamy takes it to be Śrī Lakṣmī whereas Banerjea takes it to be *Yakṣinī* Aśvamukhī.[6] The city goddess carrying cornucopiae is on the coins of Hippostratos.[7] On other coins of the same king,[8] the city goddess is shown with crown and palm. Though the city goddess is retained on the reverse side of the coin of Pentaleos,[9] yet on the obverse Artemis is found standing to front, drawing arrows from quiver at the back. It is very difficult to establish any relation between these two figures. The nature of the City Goddess is doubtful. It may be Indian also.

There is an interesting figure of Earth Goddess of the Gāndhāra school in the Lahore Museum[10]. The effigy of the goddess is seen up to the waist nnd emerging out of the lotus petals.

Banerjea refers to the goddess standing on a lotus facing and holding an uncertain object on the coins of Pāñchāla Phālgunīmitra, suspected to be a depiction of asterism *Phalguni* (Allan Cat. of coins of Ancient India in British Museum

---

[1] Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 78. in *ERE*, V, pp. 4-5 it has been mentioned that the Ardhanārīśvara figure is an attempt of the north Dravidian stock to bring forth the fertility of the earth goddess, for such community generally believed that the earth after bearing each successive harvest becomes exhausted and that if she is to continue to discharge his functions, she must be periodically refreshed and roused to new activity...the fertility of the soil was supposed to depend upon the periodical marriage of mother earth with her male consort.

[2] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 181.

[3] Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[4] *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, XIII. 7.

[5] Whitehead, *PMC*, pl. II, 35, *Cir.* 190 B.C.

[6] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 111.

[7] Whitehead, *PMC*, pl. VIII, 609.

[8] *Ibid.*. pl. VIII, 631.

[9] *Ibid.* pl. VIII, 642.

[10] Lahore Museum, No. 777; *IHQ*, Vol. XIX, March 1943, Nov. 1, fig. 1.

No. 194.5 and plates). He, however, doubts this identification as its iconography is in no way similar to that of *Purva-Phālgunī* or *Uttara-Phālgunī*, as it appears in the late compilation of Hemādrī.[1]

Let us now refer to a Tree goddesș of Bhārhut[2] represented as standing above on elephant. Zimmer finds out a symbolic explanation of this figure : 'The elephant passes through wilderness, treading shrubs, bending and uprooting trees, fording rivers and takes easily, the rat can give access to the bloted granary. The two represent the power of this god to vanquish every obstacle of the way'.[3] But the association of the goddess with elephant may hint at something more. The elephant is the vahana of Indra, and it is not unlikely that the goddess in question represents the consort of Śakti of Indra *i.e.*, Śacī or Indrānī.

In the reliefs of Sāñchī and Bhārhut we find Nāgas represented. In one of the Sāñchi reliefs[4] Nāga figure is included among the worshippers of the sacred tree. In another scene[5] she is shown in the semblance of a five-hooded cobra. Besides these theriomorphic forms we have some anthopomorphic representations also. On one of the Bhārhut[6] railing pillars a Nāga is represented in the form of human being, which is of Nāgarāja Chakravāko (Nāga Rāja). Another Nāga figure[7] in human form has been shown attended upon by two *Nāginīs*. In this figure there is queer mixture of two types of figures. While the *Nāga* is completely in human form, the *Nāginīs* are so only up to the waist or rather up to the loins; the lower portion appears to be serpent coil. The *Nāga* figure on the Prasenjit pillar[8] is quite in conformity with the prescription of *Viṣṇudharmottara*, where a damsel has been shown standing upon the central hood and the figure is shown rising from the ground. The Nāginīs are shown in half human figure. The divinity of these beings in this period is doubtful so far Buddhist sculptures are concerned. In the Graceo-Buddhist art the hereditary feud between the *Nāgas* and the *Garuḍa*, is a favourite subject.

In the Buddhist are Hāritī[9] was represented as early as this period. The earlier representation of this goddess is found in Gāndhāra School. The figure

---

1. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 137.
2. Zimmer, *op. cit.*, fig. 19.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
4. Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, pl. XV, 3. Grunwedel, *Buddhist Art in India*, pp. 49f, fig. 26.
5. Fergusson, *op. cit.*, p. 43, pl. xxxii, Grunwedel, *op. cit.*, p. 62, fig. 35; Smith, *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, fig. 47.
6. Cunningham, *Stupa of Bharhut*, p. 26. pl. XV. 3.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 27, pl. XIV.
9. The goddess Hariti is discussed fully in Appendix A.

from Tekht-i-Bahi (now in the Peshawar Museum)[1] is a fine specimen. Hāritī and Pañcikā are shown side by side in this reliefs from Sahri-Bahlol.[2] She is also represented in the Mathurā art, where she has been shown as a goddess of fertility and child birth. Several figures of her belonging to the Kuṣaṇa period, are in the possession of the Archaeological Museum at Mathurā[3].

Hence we can say that the cult of the Mother Goddess was now fully established, a regular process of cult-amalgamation and combination of iconographical features was also going on.

---

1. Marshall, J., *The Buddhist Art of Gandhara*, p. 84, fig. 112.
2. Getty, A., *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, p. 87; Foucher, *L'art greco-bouddhique du Gandhara*, II, fig. 387.
3. Nos. F. 8 and 144; Agrawals, V.S., *Hand book of the Sculptures in the Curzon Museum of Archaeology*, Mathura, p. 25.

CHAPTER 6

MOTHER GODDESS IN THE GUPTA AND POST-GUPTA PERIOD

The vast extent of *Purāṇic* and *Epics* literature which are almost similar in conception, together with the archaeological materials available from 3rd Century A.D. and onwards is a treasure house of evidence for tracing Mother worship in this period. As regards the dates of these literary sources the *Epics* are older than the *Purāṇas* and among the various Purāṇas also the date of composition varies. Most of the *Purāṇas* were composed during the early 3rd Century A.D. and in the Gupta period. But none of them is later than the 8th Century[1] A.D. Dr. Hazra is of opinion[2] that different chapters of the *Purāṇas* were written and additions made at different times. He thinks that the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* excluding *Devī Māhātmya* section, the *Brahmāṇḍa* and the *Vāyu Purāṇa* were composed before the 5th century A.D., the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* in the last quarter of the 3rd Century A.D. or the first quarter of the fourth, and the *Matsya* has been taken to be composed in between the 3rd and the 10th Cent. A.D.[3] It was originally composed by the Vaiṣṇavas, and Saivites. Chapters were added later on[4] whereas the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* has been taken to be a work of *Pañcarātras* (400 A.D.-500 A.D.) by Dr. Hazra.[5] The *Epics* which are generally taken to date to about 400-300 B.C. to 100 B.C. may have been composed between 400 B.C. to 400 A.D.[6] This uncertainty of date is due to constant interpolations; and it becomes difficult to sort out portions composed in different period. The *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata* appears to be a work of the Kuṣāṇa times as it mentions Mahāvarāha but does not mention Śrī-Lakṣmī, though Viṣṇu is called *Lakṣmyavāsa* and *Śrī-vāsa*. It is only in the Gupta period that Śrī-Lakṣmī came to be installed by the side of Viṣṇu. Thus, composition of this part can safely be placed in between the 2nd and the 4th Cent. A.D. as taken by Grierson. Agrawala holds that the final composition of *Mahābhārata* was in the early Gupta age.[1]

---

[1] Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology*, (*Vedic and Purāṇic*).

[2] Hazra, *Purāṇic Records on Rites and Customs*, p. 24.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 32.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 31.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 212.

[6] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 1; The accoont of goddess Durgā and Kālī occurring in the *Mahābhārata*, may be dated in the third, fourth century A.D. as Payne thinks *cf*. Payne. *The Śāktas*, p. 39.

There is much similarity between the *Purāṇic* conception of religious belief and that of the *Epic* one. The sets of gods and goddesses and their mutual relationship, though have a sharp departure from the Vedic one, are quite similar. Still in the *Epics* the conception of Mother Goddess worship is not so perfect as we find in the *Purāṇas*. Therefore, is proper to assume that both of these important literary sources as belonging to a period later than the Kuṣāṇa. It is also justified because the iconographic representation of the goddesses on a large scale according to the *Purāṇic* and *Epic* conception, begins during this period. We find a perfection of cult images during the Gupta and post-Gupta times whereas in the Kuṣāṇa period it was still in its infancy.[2] And the Gupta age is considered to be one of the most glorious periods in the cultural history of India, when an all round development in the field of art and literature took place.

The vast extent of the Vedic literature, commencing from the four Vedas to the *Sūtras*, contain certain references to many deities who are, as we have seen, the personifications of the natural phenomena. These deities change considerably, in their conception, in the subsequent literature. The Buddhist literature gives only a passing reference to many of the Vedic deities and also to some folk beliefs. But in the *Epics* (the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*) and the *Purāṇas* we find the Mother Goddess worship gaining prominence. In the *Purāṇas* and the *Epics*, we find all the goddesses of the early period somehow or the other being connected to one or the other member of the Hindu Triad with greater powers and prominence. The conception of Hindu Trinity is final in the *Purāṇas* each with a consort and the consorts were represented with all the iconographic features of their lords. But the emergence of Goddess Durgā as a popular cult in the subsequent age is quite interesting. It was the consort of Śiva who was finally conceived as an all powerful Mother Goddess. The unification of the different goddesses is evident in the *Purāṇas* as well as in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Epics* never intended to glorify the Great Goddess and if an attempt was made in the two Durgā *stotras*, one by Arjuna in the *Bhīṣmaparva* and other in the *Virāṭaparva* by Yudhiṣṭhira, these *stotras* may be taken to be a later interpolation since the conception of the Great Goddess here is almost similar to that of the *Devī-Māhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. Payne thinks it may be dated in the third or fourth Century A.D.[3] These *stotras* bring out many traits of the great goddess to be found in the later Tāntric texts.[4] Hence the *Epic* and the *Purāṇic* literature may be taken together, to deal

---

1. *ABORI*, 1956; p. 3 f.
2. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 71.
3. Payne, *The Śāktas*, p. 39.
4. Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 101.

with the subject for the period (the post-Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta period) along with a vast extent of archaeological materials coins, inscriptions and sculptures, etc. The works of Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti, Vākpati, Śudraka, Kalhaṇa, etc. also gives us enough material for our study. Similarly on the coins of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, we find representation of many goddesses and they can be definitely related to some particular cults. The inscriptions too give many such references regarding the worship of the Mother Goddess. A certain inscription of 502 A.D. speaks of *Devī-Karmāntikā* who received the grant on behalf of the goddess.[1]

The three consorts of the three principal Hindu gods (members of the Hindu Trinity—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva) also emerged as deities of definite cults and we have a large number of iconographical materials to show their wide worship during the period in question. Therefore, it is befitting to examine separately these goddesses—Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī, and Pārvatī (with all her important forms) and other Mother Goddess cults, *e.g.* Sapta-Mātṛikās, Serpent goddess, Bhūdevī, etc. But confining to these goddesses only would be an incomplete survey; the presence of the idea of Mother Goddess in the entire *Epics*[2] cannot be ignored.

The *Epics*—the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* primarily deal with well knit plots; the Pāṇḍavas and the four son of the king of Ayodhyā, Daśaratha, respectively and also side by side do contribute to the glorification of the supreme lord of the Vaiṣṇavas, Lord Viṣṇu. The themes on the other hand might be taken as based on the conflict between virtue and vice when virtue triumphed. As religion played a vital role in shaping of human characters, so much so that the *Mahābhārata* is styled as the fifth *Veda*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* glorify Rāma and Kṛiṣṇa respectively, the two incarnations of Viṣṇu. It is interesting to note that though in the *Rāmāyaṇa* the wife of Rāma is the heroine, Rukmiṇī, the wife of Kṛiṣṇa is not the heroine of the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Mahābhārata* it is Drupadī who occupies the prominent place. But undoubtedly both of them are divine in character.

Sītā is a mythological figure indeed. Sītā, etymologically stands for the 'furrowed earth' or 'furrows'[3] Her mother was Earth herself.[4] A passage in the *Harivaṇśa* says that Sītā is the Mother Goddess of the tillers of the soil, just as Earth is that of all being.[5] S.K. Dikshit believes that the word 'Sītā' has some philological connection with a Babylonian word for earth, viz. *ir-si-tu*.[6] He further observes that if 'Sītā is the goddess of furrowed earth, A-sītā would be the goddess of unfurrowed earth of desert. No such goddess is known to India'.[1] He, however, attempts to connect A-lakṣmī with Syrian Asiti.[2] He also sees the possibility of the origin of the cult of Sītā in Egypt.[3] Dikshit again remarks that, "Sītā was a mother of goddess of sylvan prosperity is made clear more than anything else by the names of her son Kuśa and Lava. They are definitely said to have taken their names from the upper and lower parts respectively of the sacred Kuśa grass cut by hand.[4] Jacobi also finds a similarity between the myths connected with Hanuman's search for Sītā and Saramā's search as described in the *Ṛigveda*[5] (X.108). Sītā in the *Ṛigveda* is said to have lifted the bow of Rudra,[6] like the Sītā of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, who too did the same act. If Sītā is incarnation of Lakṣmī, Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna are considered to be parts of Viṣṇu.[7]

---

[1] Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, p. 403, line 11.

[2] *Purāṇas* need not be mentioned here because goddesses mentioned there are being dealt separately.

[3] *Abbidhāna-ratna-mālā* of Halāyudha, II. 421; *Amara-kośa*, st. 900.

[4] *Rāmāyaṇa*, Bāla-kanda, 66.14; Uttara-Kāṇḍa, 97. 14 f.

[5] *Harivaṅśa*, II. iii : 14.

[6] Dikshlt, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 153.

Draupadī in the *Mahābhārata* is a form of Lakṣmī like Sītā and like her also not from a human mother, but from a sacrifical fire lit by her father.[8] Draupadī is, therefore, another goddess of Sītā type. Her husband Arjuna is Indra-*Putra*, even in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (II.i.2.11-V.iv.3.7—अर्जुनो हवै नामेद्रः) Moreover, Arjunī in the *Ṛigveda* (5.84.2) is Pṛithivī and also (*ṚV.* 1.49.3) a synonym of Uṣas.[9] Subhadrā is another wife of Arjuna and it is interesting to note that Subhadrā is one of the titles of Devī in the Purāṇic list, (*Kurma Purāṇa*, *Purvabhāga*, XII, 167—सुभद्रा देवकी सीता वेद वेदाङ्गपारगा).[10] Devakī is another divine lady in the *Mahābhārata*; being the mother of Lord Kṛiṣṇa, who is none else than the incarnation of Viṣṇu himself. Devakī has been mentioned as being the name of a Mother Goddess of Mathurā according to a passage occuring in the *Matsya* and the *Padma Purāṇa*, which also speak of Vindhyavāsinī as a Mother Goddess of the Vindhyas and of Sītā as that of *Chitrakūṭa* (*Matsya Purāṇa*, XIII. 39; *Padma Purāṇa*, *srisṭi-khaṇḍa*, V.17.203 (देवकी मथुरायां तु पाताले परमेश्वरी । चित्रकूटे तथा सीता)[11] Kṛiṣna's mother Devakī, an incarnation of Aditi according to the *Harivaṃśa* (I.55. 37f) was also a sister of Kaṃśa.[12] Dikshit shows a similarity between the Kaṃśa and Kronos myth.[13]

---

1. Dikshit S. K., *op. cit.*, p. 153-54.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
5. Jacobi, The *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Das Ramayana*), p. 100; Jacobi thinks therefore that Sita of Rāmāyana is identical with the Sītā of *Ṛigveda*. She came into existence while Janaka was ploughing land (Ibid., p. 98) and again went back to the arms of Mother Earth. *Cf. Rāmāyaṇa*; 1.66.13 and 1.7.97.
6. *ṚV*, 1.167.49.
7. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.15.31.
8. *Mbh*. 1.167.49.
9. Dikshit, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 157, also विन्ध्ये विन्ध्यनिवासिनी ।
12. Rhea-Agdistis, is the sister of Kronos.
13. Dikshit, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

The Vedic goddess Aditi is not altogether forgotten in the *Epics*. She is still the 'Mother of Gods'.[1] She is the mother of particularly, the thirty-three gods.[2] Hopkins observes that 'her usual aspect is that of beneficent Mother Goddess renounced more for her motherhood than anything else, though known also as having lost her ear-rings, which were subsequently recovered from Naraka and given to Sūrya'.[3] She is also spoken of being a desease-goddess like Revatī.[4] Rāma makes Aditiś womb a refuge for Rāvaṇa.[5] In this way she becomes identified with the earth but at the same time also differentiated from Pṛithivī.[6] She is Mahādevī as Mother of Viṣṇu.[7] In the *Mahābhārata* she is called the trouble giver to children, a most dreadful Revatī *graha*.[8] The identification of Aditi and Devakī is also proved because both of them are mothers of Viṣṇu, the former of the celestial and the latter of the human incarnation of the same god. Such an identification is also upheld by the *Purāṇas*.[9] S.K. Dikshit[10] tries to show that there is a close relationship between Devakī-Aditi and the Chaldoean Goddess 'Dam-kina' who represented Earth[11] and he observes that without doubt Dam-ki assumed two forms in India—Devakī and Devī. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* definitely speaks of Aditi, the mother of gods and presented ear-rings which he brought after killing Naraka, a demon. Aditi praised him and then Viṣṇu said to Aditi, 'Mother Goddess, do thou shew favour unto me thy blessings'.[12]

There is now no doubt that Draupadī, Sītā and Devkī were the divine characters and were considered to be incarnations of Lakṣmī (Sītā and Draupadī), the consort of Viṣṇu. In spite of their being popular among people they could not emerge as an independent cult. Sītā no doubt is worshipped till today and iconographically represented along with her husband Rāma; but Draupadī could not be worshipped and was generally conceived as more human than divine in character. It was perhaps because her husband Arjuna (belonging to Indra) never got such reverence. Indra was himself thrown in the background with the rise of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. It is interesting to note that Arjuna and Kṛiṣṇa are closely associated in the *Mahābhārata*. One is the son of Indra and the other is

---

1. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 81; Wilson, *The Vishṇu Purāṇa*, p. 584-85.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 3.14.14.
3. Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 81; of *Rāmāyaṇa* 3.153.3.
4. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 3.230.29.
5. *Ibid.*, 4.1.120.
6. Hopkins, *EM*, p. 79.
7. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 13.83.27; Varuṇa is called श्रदिते पुत्र: in *Mbh.* 9.49.12. Sūrya is also श्रनिति सुत (*Mbh.* 3,3,25).
8. *Mbh.* 3.230.29('श्रदिर्ति रेवती प्राहुर्महस्तस्यास्तु रेवत:। सोडपि बालान महाघोरो बाघते वै महाग्रह):'.
9. Dikshit, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
11. Maspero, Gaston, *Dawn of Civilization* (trans. M.L. McClure), p. 65.
12. Wilson, *The Vishṇu Purāṇa*, p. 584-85.

the incarnation of Viṣṇu. The former is shown as a devotee of Kṛiṣṇa. The Vedic cult of Indra is no more popular during this period, and here is obvious attempt to make Indra inferior to Viṣṇu. Arjuna is friend of Kṛiṣṇa, at the sametime his devotee too. This may point out that in the earlier period Indra was a powerful god (atleast in the Vedic period) but slowly and slowly he began to lose importance. At one time an independent god now becomes dependent on Viṣṇu. Thus with the rise of Vaiṣṇavism, there was a decline of the old cult of Indira.

The *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* advocate a perfect theory of incarnation. The idea further gets developed in the *Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa.*[1] Here all the important personages were considered to be incarnātions of some gods and goddesses. According to it Rāma was Viṣṇu's incarnation, Lakṣamaṇa of Śeṣanāga, Bharata and Śatrughna of Viṣṇu's Śaṅkha and Āyudhacakra respectively and Sītā of Yogamāyā, the destroyer of Madhu and Kaiṭabha. We may find here a continuity of ideas right from the *Vedas* to the *Epics*, *Purāṇas*, and the later religious literature, since the great Epic *Rāmāyana* is claimed by its author (Vālmīki) to be an explanation to the meaning of the Veda.

A purely vedic creation like Uṣas almost lost her identity. In the *Purāṇas* there are stray references to her. She was now no more divine virgin but the daughter of Bāṇa and grand-daughter of Bālī. It is interesting to note that her virginity was still retained and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[2] refers to it. Her association with demon king is quite confusing and cannot be explained in the above context.

Another important goddess not represented anthropomorphically is 'Tulsī' who is always worshipped in the form of *Tulsī* plant. According to T.A.G. Rao[3] Tulsī devī is of dark complexion, with eyes resembling the petals of the lotus flower, and having four arms; of the four hands two are in the *abhaya* and *varada* poses and the other ones hold a lotus and a *nīlotpala*. She is to be adored with *kirīṭa*, *hāra*, *keyūra*, *kuṇḍalas* and other ornaments, clothed in white garments and seated on a *padmāsana* (over a lotus). Her history is quite interesting. Once a woman named Tulsī by virtue of her austerities wished to be the wife of Viṣhṇu when she was cursed by Lakṣmī and she was transformed into a plant. She was, however, comforted by Viṣṇu that he would remain by her side taking the shape of *Śāli-grāma.*[4] The *Vāyu* and the *Padma Purāṇa* say that Tulsī was one of the products of the churning of the ocean.[5] In the worship of Tulsī we may find an attempt to adopt some folk-belief. Tree worship had a long history. In the Indus Valley

---

1. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, I.4.17-182, Rāmāyaṇa (Valmiki), I.4.6.
2. Wilson, *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, p. 593.
3. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, p. 371.
4. Wilkins, *HM*, p. 392.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 392.

period also we get evidence of such worship. Plants have worderful medicinal value. It is no wonder that in folk-belief due to its such qualities she was conceived as a goddess. "*Oshadhis* are called 'mothers' and 'goddesses', and they are invoked chiefly with waters and mountains," S.K. Dikshit[1] informs Tulsī got her place under this category. Tulsi, therefore, was admitted into Vaiṣṇava pantheon and this queer story was concocted to justify her entry.

It would not be out of place to examine the divinity as preserved in these sacred literatures. The cow, in India and elsewhere commanded special attention and reverence of the people. In Phrygia also the cow and the bull were held sacred and the killer of an ox was liable to be sentenced to death.[2] Dikshit shows the identification of Iḍā = Aditi = Pṛithivī with the sacred cow being quite familiar to the Vedic literature.[3] In India, particularly, she is '*gomata*' and to kill a cow is considered a great sin. She is sacred and every pious Hindu considered her auspicious. Even cowdung is a great purifier. Though it is interesting to note that like Egypt in India we do not have any anthropomorphic representation of the Cow-goddess. According to Hopkins, 'The divinity of cow rests on the element of toteism which consists in the defictation of that class of animals which provides a livelihood. Pastoral people naturally recognise their herds as means of livelihood.[4] In the *Mahābhārata* Surabhi or Suravi, the divine beautiful and gentle cow was taken to be the daughter of Dakṣa and mother of all cows '*gāvam mātar*[5] ! She is said to have lived in *Rasātala*[6] and gave milk which comprised of the strength of all the best things on earth; she is *svadhā*, *sudhā*, and *amṛitā* for those who lived on drinks.[7] Sarūpā, Haṃśikā, Subhadrā and Saravakā madughā, bearer of east, south, west and north corners of heaven, are the daughters of Surabhi[8] whom she created and who became the mothers of the world.[9] Surabhi is also said to have two daughters named Rohiṇī, the happy and the distinguished Gandharvī.[10] Naturally, we find in cow a form of the Mother Goddess. Rather she in the form of Surabhi represents the Great Goddess, source of other goddesses, even the divine beings like Gandharvī. She is more prominent because she is the mother of so many 'mothers of the world'. And in her we find the idea of the Great Mother Goddess as expounded by the *Purāṇas*.

---

[1] Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 80.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 190; *YV* XIII. 43; XIII. 43; *Vedic Mythology*, p. 150; *SB*, II. iii.4.34, XIV, ii.1.7; III. ii.4.20; III.iii.1.4; II.ii.4.34; VI.iii.2.7; *TB* III.xi.4.2, etc.

[4] Hopkins, *EM*, p. 16.

[5] *Mbh*, I.3927; III.144.86; XII 6432; XIII 7638, 3906.

[6] *Mbh*, V. 3602.

[7] *Mbh*, V. 3614.

[8] *Mbh*, V. 3609.

[9] *Mbh*, XIII. 3713.

[10] *Mbh*, I. 2631.

Before we actually begin with the cult images let us examine the very idea of the Śakti cult and for whith we have to depend entirely on the literary accounts. After a lapse of about 1000 years we again come to a period when India witnessed the rise of Mother Goddess cult, at least put forward by the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas*. There is no doubt that many of the ideas might have survived from the *Ṛigvedic* age even and some might have gathered enough moss to look like an entirely different conception. However, the basic idea of the role of the feminine in creation, preservation and destruction of the world remains present all through. The theory of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti*, put forward effectively by the *Sāṅkhya-Kārikā* of Īśvarakṛiṣṇa, originally believed to be expounded by the great *Ṛiṣi* Kapila, attaches a great importance to the role of *Prakriti* in creation. We find an exposition of it in the *Bhagavatagīta*.[1] *Prakriti* 'is a principle with which the material world is always connected' and 'it is the principle which the Supreme Being employs in creation. It is the Womb in which He lays the germ'.[2] 'The ideology about *Ādyāśakṭi*, the source of all the manifestations of the universe, coming forth from the eternal Purusa, can be traced to a Bhagavatagītā passage'.[3]

Puruṣa and *Prakṛiti* both are complementary to each other. One cannot function without the other. In the *Vedas* we have the conception of *Virāṭa Puruṣa* from whom all the *Varṇas* were born (*Puruṣa Sūkta*) and again in *Yajurveda* the *Virāṭa Puruṣa* is compared to the world. From this conception of *Virāṭa Puruṣa* the Hindus come to the glorification of the All-Powerful female energy—the originator of the origin, the beginning of the beginning, *Ādyāśakti*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* we do find the female energy powerful yet it cannot function without the masculine guidance. Sītā was powerful enough to burn Rāvaṇa to ashes but she does not do so because she had not taken the advice of Rāma.[4] The best exposition of the idea of *śakti* is found in the *Purāṇas* and we shall discuss it later. The idea is continuously noticed in Indian literature, right from the *Vedas* down to the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Epics*, *Purāṇas* and other works. The Supreme power by which the universe is upheld, is identified with Umā in the *Upanishad*; in the *Mahābhārata* she is the wife of Śiva. And soon in the *Purāṇas* 'She appears as Candi, with worship and an autumn festival she soon came to be worshipped as

---

[1] *Bhagavatagītā*, Ch. IX : *Sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakritim yānti*
māmikām kalpakṣaye punastāni kalpādau visrijāmyaham. || 7 ||
prakritiṃ svāmavaṣṭabhya visṛijāmi punaḥ punaḥ
bhūtagrāmamimaṃ bṛitsnamavaśam prakṛitervasat. || 8 ||

[2] *Ibid.*, ch. XIV. 3; of Kumarappa, *Hindu Conception of the DHI. Deity*, p. 62.

[3] Banerjea, J.N., p. 509; *Bhagavatagītā.*, ch. XV :
tameva chādyam puruṣaṃ prapadye,
yataḥ pravṛittiḥ prasṛitā purāṇī. || 4 ||

[4] *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sundarkānda :
असन्देंशांत्सु रामस्य तपसश्चानुपालनात: ।
न त्वां कुर्मि दशग्रीव भस्म भस्मार्हतेजसा ।।
as quoted in *JISOA*, Vol. XIII.

Devī, who is one with Brāhmaṇ, the absolute, whose nature is *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, and might be contemplated as male, female or attributeless. Gradually, the worship of Śakti as the world mother displaced the vedic ritualism. The literature relating to this phase of Hinduism is called *Tantra*. It is famous for its reverence for women who are regarded as forms of the divine mother.[1] In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[2] Devakī has been identified with all the female principles; She is *Prakṛiti*, infinite and subtle; she is goddess of speech, the energy of the creator of the universe. She is Aditi and Diti both, She is the cause of all. Similar idea about Aditi we find in the *Ṛigveda* also.

Śaṅkarāchārya in *Ānandalahrī* praises Śakti as the Mother of all *Vedas*, regulator of all *Dharmas*, root of all wealth, primal cause of all desires, Victrix of Kandarpa seed of liberation for good and the spouse of the *Para-Brahma*.[3] He further stresses upon the Motherhood of the Goddess. In his *Saundaryalāhrī* he says that : You have bestowed great kindness by feeding your milk to the sons of Tamil Land (Draviḍa)'.[4]

With this background it would be now appropriate to examine the various manifestations of the Great Mother, *e.g.*, the three different consorts of the members of Hindu Trinity, the *Mātṛikās*, the river goddesses, serpent worship, etc.

MOTHER AND CHILD

The history of the worship of the Great Mother Goddess is quite interesting. 'In her character of Great Mother, the Feminine is a virgin' as observed by Neumann[5] does not hold good in Indian conception of the goddess.[6] No doubt in the Vedic period we do have some references to the virginity of the Great Goddess as noticed in the case of Uṣas and Pṛithivī. Still we find all through an attempt to find out a companion for the great Goddess. The Great Mother Durgā (in her final form) and the Great God Śiva had developed independently. And there was a regular attempt to unite these two deities. There are three such stages : (1) when Śiva was given an equal status with the Great Goddess and their regular marriage was found necessary (Hara Gaurī images); (2) and in its final form when Śiva and Pārvatī formed two halves of the same figure (The *Ardhanārīśvara* conception); and (3) in one of the stages Śiva was simply taken to be a child dependent on the Great Mother (*Sadyojāta* conception). Generally speaking this conception is the latest development of the Mother Goddess cult when she was considered the Great Mother on whom her spouse was dependent. In India the literary account of such a conception is quite late.

---

[1] Radhakrisnan, *The Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 734.

[2] Wilson, *The Vishṇu Purāṇa*, p. 500-501.

[3] Avalon, *Hymns to the Goddess*, p. 65.

[4] *Tavastanya ṃ manye.........dayāvatyādantaṃ draviḍa sisurasvādya.*

[5] Neumann, E., *The Great Mother*, pp. 269-70; also see Brifault, *The Mothers*, Vol. III, p. 168-71.

[6] Murray has classified fertility figurines in three classes and one is Divine Virgin or Ishtar type Dasgupta in his book, '*Origin and Evolution of Indian Clay Sculpture*' has shown that in every peri od such figures should be found.

The mother and child figure "does not betoken a regression to infantalism, in which an 'adult' becomes a child, or is moved with mostalgia by mother's love for her child; "rather, man in his genuine identification with the child experiences the Great Mother as a symbol of the life on which he himself, the "grown-up depends[1]."

The antiquity of the mother and child figure can be traced as early as the indus Valley Civilization in India. Since then in every period we come across a large number of Mother and Child figures. Murray has described them as Divine Woman or Isis type. But no definite explanation could be given for these figures. However, from time to time the mother and child figures were favourites with Indian artists. Whether terracotta mother and child figures also represented a definite cult is difficult to say. It was perhaps the idea which was transformed. We frequently come across different types of mother and child representations in Indian art *e.g.* Kṛishṇa and Devaki, Buddha and Māyā, Gaṇeśa and Pārvati and the *Sadyojāta* from Śiva himself. Besides these divine representations, a large number of mother and child figures appear on the outer walls of temples.

Gopinath Rao refers to a figure of Diti holding *nīlotpala*, a fruit and carrying a child on her lap.[2] The crude figures showing a mother with a baby or two babies hanging near her breast, undoubtedly represented the Mother Goddess,[3] keeping in with the tradition of the Divine woman or Isis type representation of the earlier period and perhaps they were offered at the sacred spots by females who wished to have children.[4] From Datiana (Patna District) a stone representation of mother and child has been taken to signify the birth of Kṛiṣṇa.[5]

The 'Infant Buddha and Māyā' figure is represented on the Buddhist railing pillars. From Rajim[6] in Central India one of the Buddhist railing pillars represents Māyā Devī holding a branch of *Śal* tree, while the infant Buddha is actually leaping out of her side. At Pathari[7] the principal statue is a life-size figure of Māyā Devī with the infant Buddha. This superb *bas relief*, which competent judges have pronounced to be the finest and largest piece of Indian sculpture, may be dated in the post-Gupta period. Cunningham noticed a female figure holding a child in her lap at Tetrawa.[8] From Khajuraho[9] there is a bracket figure of a female holding the

[1] Neumann, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

[2] Rao. T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, p. II, p. 369.

[3] *ASIAR*, *1936-37*, p. 50, pl. XXIV 14-15.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 50. They all have some sort of fertility significance.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

[6] *ASIR*, Vol. VII, 1873-74, p. 151.

[7] *ASIR*, Vol. VII, 1871-72, p. 70.

[8] *ASIR*, Vol. XI. p. 184; In the inscription on the pedestal the term Puṇḍesvarī is written, which may be the name of the Goddess. It is difficult to identify this Goddess with any of the popular deity.

[9] Ganguly and Goswami, *Indian Art and Heritage*, Plate 28, P.V.

child in both hands. At the famous temple of Jagannāth,[1] Purī, built about A.D. 1100, a well-executed group representing a Hindu mother with her baby offers a welcome change on gods and goddesses. The mother and child painting at Ajanta[2] (Cave XVII) is also remarkable.

To enumerate a few more representations of this type, Cunningham refers[3] to the figure of a woman and a child churning butter and a woman seated and kissing her child discovered from Bhuili in Vindhyan Hills. This may give an idea of the representation of Kṛiṣṇa and his mother (Yaśodā). He also refers to a colossal statue of a female with a child lying by her side. Although Cunningham took this to represent Māyā Devī and Buddha yet he does not rule out the possibility of its being Devakī and the infant Krisna.[4]

The mother and child figure, however, in the representation of Śiva's family, is a very common type. In the usual representation Śiva is shown sitting on the throne and Pārvatī sitting beside holding a child (Skanda) on her knee. Not only Gaṇeśa and Skanda appear as child with the Great Mother but Śaṅkara also in the form of child was held against the breast of the Goddess. This form of the Great God is known as 'Sadyojāta', etymologically to mean 'a child just born'. We come across the origin of such a form in the Purāṇas.[5] Mr. Bhattasali suggested that 'Mother and child' images of Bengal represent *Sadyojāta* Maheśvara, because on the top of these, sculptures are found representing Siva in the form of *liṅga*, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya and sometimes also Navagraha and other deities.

Sadyojāta is one of the five faces of Śiva, 'the mother being the eternal fertility and creator deity, and the child standing for Śiva, the eternal Puraṣa'.[6] This form of representation might be taken to be influenced by *Tantricism* because the conception of all-powerful Female principle is matured.

N.K. Bhattasali[7] has discussed in detail 'the mother and child images of Bengal' representing *Sadyojāta* Maheśvara and refers to no less than eight images described in the catalogue of Varendra Research Society Museum published in 1914. The usual characteristics of these images as noted by him is that on the top of these sculptures are found figures representing Śiva in the form of a *liṅga*, Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya and some times also Navagraha. Shri Niradhbandhu Sanyal doubts[8] the very identification of mother and child images as *Sadyojāta* representation. He has shown that the Śiva characteristics as noted by Bhattasali cannot be the sole criterion for such an identification because that is not exclusive monopoly of such types and thus to brand them as *Śaiva*. Mr. Sanyal on the other hand remarks that *dhyānas*[1] for *Sadyojāta* given in the *Tantras* do not describe Śiva as a new born babe. Further he points out the passage from *Brahma Purāṇa* : 'when the divine daughter of the Mountain came with a garland in her hands to the assembly of the gods where she was to choose her husband, Śiva, in order to test her, assumed the form of a child and was found sleeping on the lap of the bride. She perceiving the child and coming to know through meditation that he was the god himself, accepted him with pleasure. Then the daughter of the Mountain, glad to receive the husband her heart desired for, returned from the assembly holding the child against her breast'.[2]

---

[1] Smith, V.A., *A History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, p. 125. pl. 77A.

[2] *Ibid*., pl. 57A.

[3] *ASIR*, Vol. XI, p. 132.

[4] *ASIR*, Vol. X, p. 72.

[5] *Brahma Purāṇa*, Ch. XXXVIII. Description of *Svyaṃbara*. Śiva as a child relates to an incident when Pārvatī went to choose her husband and Śiva assumed the figure of a child and Pārvatī returned contented holding the child against her breast.

[6] *JBRS*, XXXXV, pt. 1-4, p. 480.

[7] Bhattasali, N.K., *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, p. 134.

[8] *AIOC*, 1933, pp. 775-79.

Mr. Sanyal thus concluding his discussion observes "that the contention for identifying the 'mother and child' images as *Sadyojāta* fails to carry conviction on the contrary, as there are distinct references in the *Bhaviṣyottara Purāṇa* and other texts relating to *Kṛiṣṇa-Janamāshṭamī* that the birth scene of Kṛiṣṇa should be represented with an image of Devakī lying as just delivered on a couch in the centre with child Kṛiṣṇa as suckling her breast, Lakṣmī shampooing her feet and gods and genii of every kind as soaring above in the air.' The identification of Mr. Sanyal appears to be convincing. The reclining posture of Pārvatī does not appear to be in conformity with the description of *Brahma Purāṇa* whereas 'Devakī and Kṛiṣṇa' representation appears to be correctly reflected in this type. Moreover in late medieval period Vaiṣṇavism was also very popular in Bengal. There is no wonder if such a representation got its favour at the hands of artists. We have positive evidence from Paharpur, where the reliefs depicting Rādhā and Kṛiṣṇa legends in the late medieval period have been discovered. It is correct to hold that in *Sadyojāta*[3] representation Pārvatī should not be shown reclining and also no explanation could be given for the figure shampooing the feet except what has already been held.

The other icongruity with Mr. Samyal's identification is the invariable association of *liṅga* and *yoni* symbol on these figures. And due to this every little doubt remains for its identification as Saivite *liṅga* and *yoni* is the exclusive symbol of Śiva and Pārvatī and its representation is exclusively a monopoly of Saivites. This is perhaps a representation, Pārvatī with Viraka as a child, according to the account preserved in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[4] When Śiva told her that Viraka would be her son, Vijayā was sent to fetch Viraka.[1] If may be pointed out here that the lady shampooing the feet of the principal figure reclining can be identified with Vijayā.[2] It is, further said that Pārvatī embraced the child and kissed him. The child was decorated with *kiṅkiṇi*, *mekhalā*, *Nūpura*, *Keyūra* made of *maṇi*, etc. And we can notice some ornaments on the body of the child.

---

[1] *AIOC*, 1933, p. 777; Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. II, pt. II, p. 378; Arthur Avalon, ed., *Prapañchasāra Tantra*, Tantric Texts, Vol. III, Calcutta, Intro. Ch. XXVI, p. 51.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 778.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 779; *cf. Annual Report of the Varendra Research Society, 1928-29*, App. 20-21.

[4] *Matsya Purāṇa*; *Kumarsambhava*, *Prasaṅga*, Ch. 154.

KALYĀṆA SUṄDARA (MARRIAGE SCENE)

As already pointed out in the history of the worship of Mother Goddess, virgin mother was first to be worshipped, since she was considered to be solely responsible for creation. It is only in the later period that a regular marriage was essential for the efficient working of human society and thus the goddess also was given a husband.[3] In India also such an attempt is noticed all through. And such marriage scenes become quite favourite of the Indian artist. The marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī is the most popular type represented.

From the Śuṅga period we find male and female figures apperring together. Śiva and Umā appear on the coins of Kuṣāṇa rulers. But the proper representation of Śiva and Pārvatī began in the Gupta period. The marriage scene of Śiva and Pārvatī is a common art motif in the Indian sculpture. There are different legends in the *Purāṇas* and other contemporary works regarding the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī. Certain *Purāṇas* also give rules for the making of images of Śiva-Pārvatī.

The marriage scene of Śiva and Pārvatī depicted on the walls of Ellora temple is remarkable.[4] This relief provides a brillient theme of the Śiva *līlās*—known as '*Pārvatī-Kalyāṇam*'—the marriage of Pārvatī with Śiva. This relief is of Rāṣṭrakūṭa period. In the *Epics* as well as in the *Purāṇas* the marriage of Śivā and Pārvatī is described in an interesting way. But its representation started late. In this image, the lower hand of Śiva grasps the right hand (*Pāṇigrahaṇa*) of Pārvatī, while the upper right arm is stretched up probably in the gesture of benediction. Brahma is shown here officiating as priest.

Another image of Umā—Maheśvara[5] *i.e.* Śiva and his wife Umā, approximately of the 9th Century, is interesting. It agrees in the main with the description given in *Matsya Purāṇa.*[6] 'The figure of Umā, naively looking on the face' of her consort (*haravaktrāvalokinī*) is lively and charming and the pose of Śiva, who, according to the legend has been persuaded by Umā to give up ascetic practices (*tapas*) and marry her, is full of dignity. The face of the god reflects the spirit of detachment befitting one who has long led the life of an ascetic'.[1] An eleventh century image representing the marriage of Śiva was found at Gaya (in the collection of Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee).[2] Here Śiva and Durgā are shown standing side by side with Brahmā seated on the ground between them in front of the altar of sacrificial fire. Here Durgā is showing standing side by side and not in front of Śiva as usually found in the Eastern Bengal type.[3] A sandstone image of Śiva and Umā[4] of late 10th Century A.D. has been found in Rajasthan. K.D. Bajpai discovered a stone sculpture showing seated Śiva and Pārvatī of the early Kalachuri style datale to circa 9th century.[5] This group is a well known and often repeated icon of the non-architechiral kind. The goddess is embraced by god who is four armed. Similar icons are found in numbers from all over India. In some of the examples the goddess is seated side by side whereas in others on the lap of Śiva.[6] Hara-Parvatī and Umā-Maheśvara images can be classed under this group. Here the goddess is always represented with her husband. In India where marriage is essential and widowhood in a curse, this type got special favour. Not only Śiva-Pārvatī but Sītā-Rāma, Rādhā-Kṛishṇa, etc., also got wide popularity, both in art and literature of the subsequent age.

---

[1] Matsya Purana; *op. cit.*, VI, 547-549.

[2] *Rupam.*, No. 40, Oct. 1929, fig. 32. Here a lady has been shown shampooing and on both the sides two ladies are standing. Above the panel, figures of different deities appear with *linga* & *yoni* in the beginning, whereas on other figures of this type shampooing lady is absent. *Cf. JBRS*, XLV, Pts. I-IV, p. 482 and the accompanying plate, an acquisition by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, Patna University.

[3] Vedic idea of Dyāvāpṛithvī is the oldest Indian conception.

[4] Ganguly, O.C. and Goswami, A., *Indian Art and Heritage*, p. III, pl. 16.

[5] *ASIAR 1926-27*, pl. XLIII b, p. 208.

[6] 260, 11-19.

A very interesting and extensive mural paintings are found of the walls of the ancient temples and places of Cochin belonging to a period from the 16th Century A.D. Among these the line drawing depicting the marriage scene of Umā on the walls of the Mattanchari Palace is wonderful. The scenes are in conformity with the story of the marriage of Śiva with Umā, given by Kālīdāsa in the *Kumārasambhava*.[7]

Besides Śiva-Pārvatī marriage scenes 'the marriage of the Bodhi-Sattva in Gāndhāra relief'[8] has also been represented regarding which it is observed that one which even in its most abbreviated form could not fail to suggest marriage, and to the better informed Buddhists, the royal marriage par excellence that of the Bodhisattva to Yaśodā.'[9]

---

1. *ASIAR 1926-27*, p. 208.
2. *ASIAR 1925-26*, p. 176, pl. IXVII, fig. 6. Two such specimens in Rajshahi also *Baṅgīya Sāhitya Parishad* are found.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
4. Codrington, *Study of Mediaeval Indian Sculpture*, p. 28, pl. 8.
5. *IAR*, 1970-71, p. 66.
6. Panigrahi, K.C., *Archaeological Remains at Bhubneshwar*, pp. 141-42.
7. *JISOA*, Vol. III, 1935, p. 14.
8. *ASIAR*, *1925-26*, p. 175, pl. LXVI a, c.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

ARDHANĀRĪŚVARA

We have seen that the cult of Ardhanārīśvara came into existance in the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa period, on the evidence of an interesting miniature relief of Ardhanārīśvara figure belonging to Kuṣāṇa period found at Mathura.[1] Ardhanārīśvara figure is a composite figure of Śiva and his *Śakti*. Generally, *Śaktis* of a particular god is placed by his side. Here on the other hand one half of the figure is masculine whereas other half is feminine. 'It is one of those curious creations of the Indian mind which are due rather to phantasy than to good taste and may perhaps be traced to the conception of Śākta doctrine that only when combined with Śakti is capable of discharging his divine functions. This belief in the inseparable union of the masculine and feminine elements in the creator, has thus resulted in the phantastical image of which the left half-represents the female (Pārvatī) and the right half, the male (Śiva)'.[2] And this type of image is also called Ardhanārīśa and Pārāṅgala.[3]

The philosophical background of such a conception can be found in the *Sāṅkhya* philosophical system. This system teaches the separate existence of eternal spirits called 'the self' or 'Male' on the one side and of an eternal productive force or prolific germ (*Prakṛiti* fem. or *Māyā*) on the other and the union of the two was believed to be indispensible before any creation could result.[4] Monier Williams observes that, "The spirit which was called 'the self' (*Ātman*) in one system and 'the Male' (*Puruṣa*) in the other—because in the popular creed a separate female god. The union of the two was expressed in the later mythology by the Ardhanārī or Androgynous form of Śiva—in which the right side of the god is represented as male, and the left side as female or by the united male and female symbols (*liṅga* and *yoni*) set upon innumerable shrines, throughout every part of India (Compare the union of Hermes and Aphredite)."[5]

The conception of Ardhanārīśvara is really interesting. In the *Putāṇas* it is related that when Brahmā asked Rudra to divide himself, the latter became divided into male and female forms.[6] It has been maintained about it that here we find an attempt of the north Dravidian stock to bring forth the fertility of the Earth Goddess as "the fertility of the soil was supposed to depend upon the periodical marriage of mother earth with her male consort."[7] The development of the male and female duality is also noticed in the Indian culture. The bisexulity of Śiva and Kālī 'as a single divine entity (*Ardhanārīśvara*) half male and half female symbolises the 'union of Purusha and Prakriti and of Dyaus and Pṛithvī representing heaven and earth as a single divine pair, the masculine and feminine designations of one and the same divinity.'[1]

---

[1] *JISOA*, 1937, p. 124, pl. XLIV 2; for Ardhanārīśvara figure on a seal *cf.* Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 181 f.

[2] *MASI*, No. 33, p. 25.

[3] Dlowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, p. 21.

[4] Moiner Williams, *Brahmaṇism and Hinduism*, p. 183.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 183.

[6] Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[7] *ERE*, V, pp. 4.5; Jacobi sees its it the equality of the rank of the mother goddess with her husband. *Cf.* Chattopadhyaya, *op . cit.*, p. 78.

Ardhanārīśvara is a name of Śiva among 108 such enumerated in the *Śiva Mahāpurāṇa*.'[2] To some extent it symbolises the syncretic ideology, for they apparently emphasises the union of Śivism and Śāktism. It may also suggest an equality claimed by the Śāktas for their supreme deity.

In many texts of the early as well as later period, the ideological union of Śiva and Śakti, the primaeval parents of the universe, has been delineated. An interesting story[3] is given by Rao (though the source of the story has not been given) where the creed of the Lord Śiva has been extolled. Here we mark separatist tendencies lurking in the minds of exclusive worshippers. As the story goes, once on an occasion the *Devas* and *Ṛiṣis* circumambulated Śiva and Pārvatī in Kailāśa (the abode of Śiva). But sage Bhṛiṅgī was a staunch Śaiva. He, therefore, went round the god of his choice only. This enraged Devī and due to her curse the sage was reduced to a skin covered skeleton. Sage Bhṛiṅgī was unable to stand erect on his two skinny legs. Lord Śiva took pity on him and provided him with a third leg. At the same time in order to save the honour of Pārvatī, he united his body with hers. Thus came into existance the *Ardhanārīśvara* from of Śiva. As the story further shows the pugnacious tenacity of this sectarian sage who assuming the form of beatle leaf cut a hole through the body of this composite figure and circumambulated Śiva portion only. Any way we may find in the image of Ardhanārīśvara a final overcome over the tendencies of sectarianism.[4] Such an attempt had already started in the Kusana period.

Ardhanārīśvara image is an anthropomorphic combination of male and female, whereas *liṅga* and *yoni* combined together is a symbolic representation of probably the same conception. And *liṅga* inserted in *yoni* is widely worshipped in India and installed in a large number of temple, rather in majority of Śiva temple we find this form installed. Fabri[5] has discussed an image of a seated Nandī bearing the Śiva-*liṅga* on his back and to the right, in a row a man and two ladies are shown seated with folded hands. It has been with Ardhanārīśvara, being Umā identified with the pedestal of the *liṅga*. This sculpture is remarkable from an iconograghic point of view. He quotes from the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 'that Rudra and Vishṇu are creators of the Universe and they form the Ardhanārīśvara aspect of the former deity. Here the allusion is to the Haryārdha form of Śiva, in which the female generative principles is identified with Vishṇu. That the male and female principles are inseparable and ever found together in cosmic evolution is the real import of the Ardhanārīśvara or Haryardha form of Śiva.'[1] He also refers to *Liṅga Purāṇa* which states that 'Pradhāna (nature) is called the *Liṅga*, and Parameśvara is called the Liṅgin (the sustainer of the *liṅga*), and that the pedestal of the *liṅga* is Mahādevī (Umā) and the *liṅga* is the visible Mahādeva'.[2] Fabri, therefore, concludes that 'being merely the vehicle of Śiva, Nandī can in no case be taken to stand for the *Yoni*, Umā or Viṣṇu, who are identified with the female generative principle. This sculpture must therefore represent Śiva in the abstract form seated over his vehicle a form unknown elsewhere and based, like the sculpture described above, on a mistaken notion of the real import of the legends'.[3]

---

[1] James, E.O., *The Cult of Mother Goddess*, p. 244-45; *cf.* RV, X-90.

[2] Chapter 49, Verse 19.

[3] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 5.52.53; Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. II, pp. 322-23.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 553.

[5] *ASIAR*, *1930-34*, pl. CLIII, d.

The representation of this form had a wide popularity. No doubt, in the medieval period, Dr Banerjea[4] refers to two south-Indian reliefs of the Chola period, one from Bṛhadīśvara Temple. Thanjavur, and the other from Darasuram. The Darasuram relief is quite interesting due to its three faces, eight arms and standing without Nandi behind him, but male and female halves are clearly demarcated.[5] Gopi nath Rao remarks about this sculpture 'In no Sanskrit work that has been examined do we meet with a description of Ardhanārīśvara which agrees with this image."[6] From Bhubaneśvar (Paraśurāmeswara Temple—C. 650 A.D.) also we get an eight armed dancing sculpture of Ardhanārīśvara.[7] The hands of male carry *akṣamālā* whereas of female mirror and book. In Brahmeśvara temple (C.A.D. 1060) Nandī and Lion are also found on the pedestal.[8] Apart from these a large number of Varieties of Ardhanārīśvara images with different iconographic features come to light. Even two handed figure has been found on the temple of Megheśvara.[9] An Ardhanārīśvara image from Satna District (Madhya Pradesh) is in tāṇḍava pose having twenty hands holding various *āyudhas*.[10]

From Dharamarāja Ratha Mahabalipuram we get a four armed 'hermaphrodite figure' which represents Śiva in the form of Ardhanārīśvara. In the Archaeological Survey of India reports we get references to so many such images, sculptured on the outer walls of the temple.[11] The images of Śiva and Pārvatī merged into one body are almost rare in Bengal. The Rajashahi Museum[1] piece belonging to Pāla period is not in relief like the majority of such pieces discovered from Bengal, but fully in the round. In this image the female half of the chest has a high breast; whereas the Śaiva Characteristic is indicated by the *urdhvaliṅga.*

---

[1] *ASIAR*, *op. cit.*, pp. 317-318.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18.

[4] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, pp. 553-54, pl. XXXVIII, fig. 4.

[5] *Ibid.*, pl. XXXIX, fig. 4.

[6] Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. II, p. 332.

[7] Panigarhi, K.C., *Archaeological Remains at Bhubnesvara*, p. 70.

[8] *Ibid.*, fig. 133.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[10] *ASIR*, *1967-68*, p. 67.

[11] *ASIR*, XXI, p. 20; X. p. 22; *ASIR*, *1936-37*, p. 312.

Thus we have seen that the conception of Ardhanārīśvara, which probably originated in the beginning of the Christian era was perfected by the artists of Gupta age.[2] Gupta age was an age of compromise in the field of religion atleast and most of the cults got its perfection in this age, though *tantricism* was in nascent stage. The role of feminine was further recognised. Śakti became the indispensible association of the God. Not only that Śakti also emerged into an independent cult. And here in this ardhanārīśvara form we may find a definite attempt to bring closer two different cults, Śiva and Umā or Pārvatī. Umā already appeared on the coins of the Kuṣāṇa period. Śiva and Umā were brought into closer contact by marrying them. Ardhanārīśvara form went on step further in merging two deities for their simultaneous worship.[3] We have also noticed that uptil now both these deities appeared side by side in iconographical representation like Śiva as a husband of the goddess or a baby in her arms (Sadyojāta conception).

DURGĀ

The cult of the Mother Goddess reached its perfection in the early Gupta period as known from the *Epic* and *Puranic* literature. And we notice an attempt for unification of different goddesses under one *i.e.*, Devī, and she is associated with Siva as his consort. She was conceived in the *Purāṇas* as the Great Mother Goddess, the Supreme Creatrix. The *Devī Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* gives the best exposition of such an idea. Among the different forms of Devī, Durgā is one of them. She has herself been installed as a Great Goddess, deserving great attention and adoration of the people. Yet she is a form of Devi—the Ādiśakti Mahāmāyā, the primordial energy, who connected with Lord *Ś*iva.

We have already seen, Umā, Durgā and Ambikā, mentioned in different literature and some of them (*e.g.*, Umā) iconographically represented. But their identification with Devi is done only in the early Gupta period. Umā (*Kumāra Sambhava*, I, 43, III, 58, 62, etc.) the consort of Śiva, has been referred to by Kālidāsa under several names like Pārvatī (*Kumārasambhava*, 26, V, 1 VI. 80); *Raghuvaṁsam*, II, 1 etc.), Ambikā (*Kumārasambhava* VIII, 18, 78), Gaurī (*Kumārasambhava*),[4] etc. Umā is a goddess who appears in the later Vedic literature. Her

---

1. *A catalogue of the Archaeological Relics in the Varendra Research Society*, p. 9; Majumdar, R.C., *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 445, pl. IX. 24; Majumdar, R.C., *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 305.
2. Agrawala, V.S., *Gupta Art*, p. 5.
3. Kosambi, D.D., *Myth and Reality*, p. 10.
4. Upadhyaya, B.S., *India in Kālīdāsa*, p. 316.

full account is available in the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas*. She is the daughter of Himavan from his wife Menā (daughter of Merū). She was given in marriage to the matchless Rudra and was most excellent of the goddesses.[1] She is also known as Pārvatī in a few late passages of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[2] As Parvati is accompanied by Gaurī and other divinities.[3] Since she is the daughter of Mountain she is also *Giriputrī*, *Girirājaputrī*, *Śailarājaputrī*, *Girijā*, *Giriśa*, *Parvatarāja*[4]*-Kanyā*, etc. She is also called *Nāga Kanyā* and *Nāgarājaputrī*.[5] Hopkins takes the form of Umā to go back to the primitive and universal cult of the Mother Goddess (*cf.* Aditi) who in popular mythology appears as Kalamma and as Ellamma.[6] In the *Mahābhārata* Umā is asked for protection along with Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī besides Hari, Śrī Kīrti, and Dyuti.[7] Her name frequently appears in the *Mahābhārata*[8] and she is associated with Mahādeva. She is no doubt known as, Pārvatī,[9] Maheśvarī,[10] Rudrānī,[11] Gaurī,[12] Āryā,[13] Ambikā,[14] Rudrapatnī,[15] Mahābhīmā,[16] Rudrānī,[17] etc. She is more popular by her name Durgā.

Two separate hymns occur in the *Mahābhārata* devoted to Durgā (4.6 and 6.23) and in the *Āryastava* in its supplement (*Harivaṁśa*, 3.3).[18] Here we get a number of names of the Great Goddess. She is Āryā; Kapilā (6.23.4); Karāli, Kātyāyanī (6.23.6); Kāpālī (6.23.4); Kālī (4.6., 17.6, 23, 4); Kumārī (4.5, 7; 6.23.4); Kṛiṣṇāchhavisamā (4.6.9); Kṛiṣṇapiṅgalā (6,23,4); Kṛiṣṇā (4.6, 7, 9; 6.23.4); Kaiṭabhanāśinī (6.23.9); Kokamukhā, Kauśikī (6.23.8); Chaṇḍā, Caṇḍī (6.23.5); Jayā (4.6.16; 6.23.6); Jātavedasī (6.23.10); Tāriṇī (6.23.5) Durgā (4.6.20.26; 6.23.11); Dhūmrākṣī (6.23.10); Pītavāsini (6.23.8); Brahmaṇyā (6.23.10); Brahmavidyā (6.23.11); Manderavāsinī (6.23.4); Mahākālī (4.6.17; 6.23.5); Mahādevi (4.6.22; 6.23.13); Mahiṣāsuranāśinī (4.6.15); Vijayā (4.6.16); Varavarṇinī (6.23.5);

---

[1] *Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.36.13 ff.

[2] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 224; *Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.36.21; *Śailasutā Pārvatī*.

[3] *Mahābhārata* 3, 231.49. Pārvatī and Gaurī thus appear to be two different personages.

[4] Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 224; *Rāmāyaṇa*, III, 16, 43; *Mahābhārata*, S.1.72.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 224.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 2267.

[7] *Mahābhārata*, 3.37.33 .

[8] *Ibid.*, 2.11.51.

[9] *Ibid.*, 14.42.15.

[10] *Ibid.*, 12.28.31.

[11] *Ibid.*, 2.11.41.

[12] *Ibid.*, 3.84.151.

[13] *Ibid.*, 2.23.42.

[14] *Ibid.*, 13.150.28.

[15] *Ibid.*, 3.83.17.

[16] *Ibid.*, 12.84.31.

[17] *Ibid.*, 2.11.41.

[18] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 491.

Virūpākṣī (6.23.4); Śākambharī (6.23.4); Skandamātṛi (6.23.11); Hiraṇyākṣī (6.23.9).[1] These names are quite interesting. A similar attempt we find in the *Purāṅas*, particularly, in the enumeration of 108 *Śākta Tīrṭhas*.[2] Banerjea noticed many non-Āryan strands besides Āryan ones in her character.[3] As regards the non-Āryan elements he especially mentions *Āryastava* according to which she was worshipped by the Śavaras, Barbaras, and Pulindas.[4] Her perpetual abode was over the Vindhya and she delighted in spirituous liquor, flesh and sacrificial victims.[5] Dr S. Chattopadhyaya observes that, "The association of the goddess with the Vindhyas region is interesting, for the range was the home of various Proto-Australoid tribes, while else where the goddess is expressedly associated with the Sabaras and the Pulindas who lived on the same range. The description clearly shows that a Mother goddess of the Proto-Austroloid tribes was now being merged with the great Āryan Mother-Goddess, and the Śāktas were imbibing un-Āryan habits."[6]

She is described as the younger sister of the chief of the cowherds, eldest born in the family of the cowherd Nanda, delighting always in the baffalo's blood (*Mahiṣāsṛikpriye*) and she is also Kokamukhā.[7] Chattopadhya, therefore, thinks that in connecting the Great Goddess with cowherds and Nanda, an attempt has been made to bring her in special relationship with the Vaiṣṇava cult and her name Kokamukhā, meaning the wife of Kokamukhā (another name of god Viṣṇu) also supports[8] this. He further observes that, 'This shows that the Śākta sect became important in the early centuries of the Christian era, and though the Śaivas won it to their side by making its goddess the wife of their own lord, the Vaiṣṇavas also made a similar attempt, but could not succeed like their rivals, evidently because Śiva absorbed more popular elements than Viṣṇu, and hence the popular female deity naturally came to be associated with him.'[9] 'The idea of the Great Mother-Goddess as the supreme deity, the source of all, could only be vested in the Śiva's Śakti. Among different forms of it Durgā-Mahiṣamardinī emerged as the final form of the Great Goddess.

---

1. Ramkumar Ṛai, (ed.) *Mahābhārata Kośah*, The Chowkhambha Sanskrit series work no. 98, Pat I, p. 147; *OST*, IV, p. 432.
2. See Appendix II.
3. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 491, *e.g.*, Āryā Kauśikī, Kātyāyanī, etc. are Aryan names.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 492; See is described as Aparṇā ('not even covered with a leaf garment', *i.e.*, nude), *Nagna-Śavarī* ('the leaf clad Savara woman'—this is the designation of a Vajrayana goddess).
5. Muir, *OST*, IV, p.369, *Vindhye Caiva Nāga-Sresthe, tava sthanam hi śasvatam, kālī kālī Mahākālī Sindhu, māmsa, baśu-priye.*
6. Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 101-102.
7. Muir, *OST*, IV, p. 367-8.
8. Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 102.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 102; 'Durgā is a late adoption of Viṣṇuism' observes Hopkins, *cf. Epic Mythology*, p. 225.

Durgā has been spoken of as knowledge and ignorance both, beloved of Śambhū, mother of the tree gods and formless.[1] She is Sāvitrī also *pravṛiti* and *Nivṛiti* of the world and the preserver of the world and she is *Mahāśakti* and *Sanātana*.[2] She is Sāvitrī and originator of all; She is the preserver, creator and destroyer of the world.[3] She is the Supreme knowledge, Supreme power, Supreme mind, Supreme memory and the Great delusion.[4] She is primordial *Prakṛiti*, which brings into force the triple *guṇas* and also *Kālarātri*, *Mahārātri* and terrible *Moharātri*.[5]

Durgā essentially, belongs to the family of Śiva. The Purāṇas have attempted to identify Durgā with the consort of Śiva. Her origin is also interesting. According to the *Skanda Purāṇa*[6] when Giant Durga became a terror for the Gods, Śiva took pity and asked Pārvatī to kill Durga; she first of all sent Kāla-rātri but who took to heels when the Giant advanced, then Pārvatī herself fought with the Giant, sitting on Mt. Vindhya. First of all the Giant took the shape of Elephant but Pārvatī tore him to pieces with her nails, then he took the form of Buffalo, but again suffering the blow of trident, the Giant came back to his original form with thousand arms and was then finally killed. Since she killed Durga, she became Durgā. In this version of the story she is associated with the killing of Buffalo demon (Mahiṣāsura) and this form of the Great Goddess is very popular. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[7] gives another account of her origin. According to it when demon king Mahisa vanquished *Devas*, the *Devas* making Brahmā their leader approached Śiva and Viṣṇu.[8] When Viṣṇu and Śiva heard the words of the *Devas*, they became angry with frowning eye-brows on their faces[9] from which sprang forth fierce heat;[10] so came out resplendent lusture from all the *Devas* which unified into one. To Her they handed over their weapons[11] and also other objects.[12] Thus equipped with such weapons the Great Goddess attacked Mahiṣāsura. She jumped and landed herself on the Great demon, pressing her foot on his throat, struck him with a spear.[13] The demon then half-issued from his buffalo mouth in the real form and was completely overcome by the goddess[14] who cut his head[15] with

---

1. *Śiva Mahāpurāṇa*, X. 3-4.
2. *Ibid.*, X. 10-11.
3. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 81. 54-57.
4, *Ibid.*, 81-58.
5. *Ibid.*, 81-59.
6. *Skanda Purāṇa*, ii. 83.
7. Ch. 82, 83.
8. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 82.3.
9. *Ibid.*, 82.8.
10. *Ibid.*, 82.9.
11. *Ibid.*, 82.19-21.
12. *Ibid.*, 82.22-31.
13. *Ibid.*, 83-87.
14. *Ibid.*, 83.38.
15. *Ibid.*, 83.39.

sword. The *Vāmana Purāṇa* also gives a similar account about the destruction of Mahiṣāsura; the goddess thus emerging from the combined flames of anger emitted by different gods and was Kātyāyanī.[1] Similar accounts are available in other works. Gopinath Rao refers to the *Padma Purāṇa* which says that in the *Svayambhava-manavantara*, Mahishāsura was killed by Vaiṣṇavi on the Mandaragiri, that he was once again destroyed by Nanda in the *Vaivasvata-Manvantara* on the Vindhya mountain, and that thus personified ignorance was killed by *Jñāna—Śakti* which is the same as personified wisdom[2] and also observes : "It may be that this story indicates the substitution of the buffalo-—Lotem worship by a form of goddess worship among certain early primitive tribes in the country."[3] The *Varāha-Purāṇa* on the other hand glorifies the exploits of Nanda who killed Vetrāsura but predicts that in future she would be called to destroy another troublesome demon named Mahiṣāsura. All these show that the act of killing Mahiṣāsura[4] by the Great Goddess was glorified to the extreme. The inconographical representations of this form are numerous.

The evolution of the cult of Mahiṣāsuramardinī is quite interesting. Dr. J.N. Banerjea refers to two seals (Mackey, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, plates, seal nos. 279 and 510). "The former depicts a buffalo with its heads so represented as to show both the rugged horns, below which is placed an apparently pertitioned feeding-trough; in the extreme left corner is shown a man with one hand and with the other about to thrust a spear with a barbed point into the animal's back".[5] He finds here a clue to the killing of Mahiṣāsura by a *śūla* by the Great Goddess, with the only differences that human figure on Mohinjodaro seal appears to be male.[6] Similarly on Mackay's seal no. 510, a buffalo appears to have attacked a number of people 'lying on the ground in every conceivable position.'[7] We may be thus tempted to trace the origin of Mahiṣāsura episode to even Indus Valley period. But some differences can also be noted. Seal No. 279 though depicts the killing of buffalo, the killer is a male, which may suggest some sort of hunting scene, because this buffalo does not appear to be a domestic animal, rather wild in nature. The second seal shows buffalo standing at ease among such lying figures and it is in no act of killing. This may arouse a suspicion about such a parallelism.

The earliest representation of the Durgā mahiṣāsuramardinī is generally taken to have belonged to the early Gupta period and it can hardly be dated before the

---

1. As quoted in *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, pt. II, by Rao, T.A.G. p. 350.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 354.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 354.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 355-56.
5. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI.*, p. 165.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Gupta period according to Banerjea,[1] though some recent discoveries show otherwise and the great goddess in this form is found represented even earlier. In this connection images discovered from Mathurā,[2] Besanagar[3] and Orissa[4] may be cited. The Amer Museum[5] (Jaipur) piece is noteworthy since it is taken to be of 1st Cent. B.C.[6] This terracotta plaque (discovered from Nagar or Karkoṭa-Nagara) depicts the goddess as four-armed, with lower right hand placed on the back of the buffalo, while upper right hand holds a trident. The quality of workmanship is quite poor here but the execution is successful. Most probably the Bhita and Ahichchhatra artists tried to copy the details appearing on this plaque. It may, therefore be reasonably supposed that the Nagara plaque is the earliest summary representation of the Mahiṣāmardinī aspect of the Great Goddess.[7] However, this is to be noted that in the earlier representations Mahiṣāsura is shown in the form of buffalo (mostly of Kuṣāṇa[8] period).

Marshall unearthed some very interesting miniature stone reliefs of the Gupta period at Bhita depicting the two armed figure of the Devī engaged in combat with the Buffalo demon.[9] This has been taken to be the earliest representation of the Mahisāsuramardinī form of the Great Goddess and may be earlier than the *Devī Mahātmya* section of the *Mārkāṇḍeya Purāṇa*, because here the goddess has only two arms and not many, and the Buffalo demon is also depicted purely as a figure of buffalo helplessly stretching its head on the ground. In the fifth Century A.D. representation at Chandragupta Cave (Udayagiri—Madhya Pradesh), the goddess has twelve arms[10] and in one of her hands she is holding a godha, the characteristic feature of a Mother Goddess. Banerjea observes that "Godha plays a prominent part in the mythology of the goddess Caṇḍī and Kālaketu in the mediaeval *maṅgalakāvyas* of Bengal."[11] Though fifth Century figure at Udayagiri is twelve-armed, from Chamba State a four-armed figure has been discovered belonging to the 8th Century A.D.[12] In Northern and Central India, representation of Mahiṣāsuramardinī is in conformity with the description of the *Devī Mahātamya* (in the Gupta and early medieval period).[1] But in some early medieval sculptures, the mode of depicting the fight began to change and now we find instead of the demon in a buffalo from, a man of full size having only two horns and the Devī riding a lion.[2] A slightly different form we find depicted in Haripur sculpture where *triśūla* is piercing the neck and the human figure of the demon issuing from the decapitated trunk of the animal.[3] The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* describes that the half-revealed (*ardhaniṣkranta*) great demon fought with the goddess until he was killed.[4] In the Nagarjuni Hill cave inscription of Anantavarman, the goddess is said to have placed her tinkling anklet, on the head of the demon Mahiṣāsura[5] and it also mentions the installation of her image (of Kātyāyanī) in wonderful cave of the Vindhya mountains.[6] From Gujarat and Orissa also we get a large number of images of this form of the goddess. In Bhubneśvara, Mahiṣāsuramardinī images are rather proliffic in their occurrence and mostly they represent isolated sculptures either found loose or fixed to the walls.[7] Her representation and worship continues to the present day. A four-armed stone image of Pāla period discovered from Mangalbari (Dinajpur) is worth mentioning.[8] A mutilated image of Mahiṣāsuramardini of the medieval period has been discovered from Jaimou (Dist. Kanpur).[9] A fradmentary standing stone image of Durgā with attendants has been discovered in village Gahaur (Dist. Gazipur).[10] A terracotta image of Durgā having ten arms have been discovered from Midnapur[11] (West Bengal).

---

[1] Majumdar, R.C., *The Classical Age*, p. 442.

[2] *JUPHS*, XXII, 1949, pl. 152-59; *IHQ*, XXII, pp. 154-55.

[3] Dvivedi, H.N., *Gwalior Rajya men Murtti-Kala*, p. 36, fig. 47.

[4] MASI, 44 p. 4.

[5] *Lalit-Kala*, 1-2, 1955-56, pp. 72-74, pl. XVIII. 1.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[8] Agrawala, V.S., *Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art*, p. XI; p. 570, no. 889. *Cf.* nos. 993, 2037 & 875, p. 57, no. 2784.

[9] *ASIAR*, *1911-12*, p. 86, pl. XXXI, fig. 13 & 14.

[10] *The monuments of Udayagiri Hill*, p. 35.

[11] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 172.

[12] Vogal, J.Ph., *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 138, pl. VIII B. The standing attitude here corresponds to the description given by the *Devī Mahātmya*, 'from Bhumara (NASI, 16, p. 13, pl. XIV) also a four-armed image has been found.

The south Indian images are more or less similar to that of Northern one. Mostly we find the Goddess engaged in killing the Buffalo-demon, either in human form or animal form. But the representation of goddess in the Mahiṣāsura Cave at Mahabalipuram and in the Kailasanatha Cave-temple at Ellora, is superb. In the words of Ganguli, 'a story telling relief visualising and depicting the great battle—with realistic movements and actions of considerable verb animation. Rarely has this legend been visualised in a stone with such power, skill, dramatic affect'.[12] The relief here does not simply represent the killing of the demon by the goddess, rather it introduces two armies, one that of the goddess and the other that of the Buffalo-demon.

---

1. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 498.
2. Such panels have been found at Mahabalipuram and Ellora, Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, I-II, pl. CIV (Ellora), CV (Mahabalipuram).
3. Banerjea. J.N., *DHI*, 499, pl. XLIII, fig. 2.
4. *Mārkandeya Purāṇa* 83.39.
5. Fleet, *CII*, No. 50, page 227.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
7. Panigarhi K.C., *Archaeological Remains at Bhubneshwara*, p. 133, fig. 112, 113.
8. Majumdar, R.C., *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 450, pl. LXII. 151.
9. *IAR*, *1971-72*, p. 79.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 1970-71, p. 76, pl. LXXVIA.
12. Gangoli, O.C., *The art of the Pallavas*, pl. 19.

The Mahiṣāsuramardinī conception of the goddess was not only a favourite subject with the Indian artists but also with the Javanese. The goddess is invariably shown standing with one foot, less frequently with two on the prostrate buffalo whom she pierces with her trident; and the present scene differs wholly from the conventional representation of Mahisasura episode.[1] These Javanese images more or less appear to be similar to that of the earliest representation of this goddess from Bhita already referred to. Gupta period was the age of cultural expansion and the idea which went out in that period was preserved to some extent whereas in the main land it underwent considerable change. In the 13th Century image from Nepal painted on the palm leaf, a true copy of the later images of this goddess, we find the Buffalo-demon in his human form, issuing from his buffalo body with sword in his hand and his buffalo head severed[2] lying by the side of the goddess.

In *Harivaṁśa*[3] there is a different account of the origin of Durgā. It is stated that "with the view of defeating the designs of Kaṃśa in regard to the destruction of Devak's offsprings, Viṣṇu descended into Pātāla where he sought the aid of *Nidrā-Kāla—Rūpiṇi* (sleep in the form of time and promised her in return that through his favour she should be a goddess adored in all the world. He desires her to be born as the ninth child af Yaśodā on the same night on which he was to be born as the eighth child of Devakī. He tells her that she would be taken by the foot and cast upon a rock; but would then obtain an eternal place in the Sky, becoming assimilated to him in glory; would be installed by Indra among the gods, received by him as his sister, under the name of Kanśikī, and obtain from him (Indra) a perpetual abode on the Vindhya mountain, where thinking upon him (Viṣṇu), she would kill the two demons Śumbha and Niśumbha, and would be worshipped with animal sacrifice".[4] In the *Markandeya Purāna* also she is associated with Viṣṇu (here she is *Mahāmāyā*, *Yoganidrā*) when she killed Madhu and Kaiṭabha and the divine sleep of Viṣṇu, was praised by Brahmā as "abiding in his eyes, the mistress of the universe, the support of the world, the cause of its continuance and destruction."[5] In the *Virāṭparva* Durgā is not described as Pārvatī, wife of Mahādeva but in the eighth *śloka* she is compared to Padma, wife of Nārāyaṇa, though a Kaumārī herself. B.C. Majumdar,[6] therefore, thinks that Durgā had not become Pārvatī when this chapter was composed, and there is no reference to her relationspip with Himalayas, rather she is distinctly described being of cowherd family associated with Kṛiṣṇa which may hint at her being the tribal goddess of the

---

1. MASI, No. 33, p. 35.
2. Agrawala, V.S., *Devī Mahātmya* (*The Glorification of the Great Goddess*), plate opposite page 62 (line drawing).
3. *Harivaṃśa*, vv, 32-36.
4. *Ibid.*, v. 3242.
5. *Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 81.56.
6. *JRAS*, 1906, p. 356-57.

Gopas or the Ahiras. Payne, however, observes that in the *Harivaṃśa* there is a definite allusion to the legend linking the goddess with Kṛiṣṇa at same time she is more clearly identified with the wife of Śiva.[1] The *Harivaṃśa*, a work of the fourth century A.D. "also contains references which show the popularity of the goddess, and that she was identified with all the chief deities, and has stolen their characteristic epithet.[2]

V.S. Agrawala[3] analyses the *Devī-mahātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and divides it into three parts : (*i*) *Pūrva Carita*—the divine conflict against Madhu and Kaiṭabha, (*ii*) *Madhyama Carita*—the battle against Demon Mahiṣa, and (*iii*) *Uttara-Carita*—having three constituents : battle against Gaṇḍa and Muṇḍa; battle against Raktabīja; and battle against Śumbha and Niśumbha. In these stories all the epithets of the Great Goddess occur and different names are identified or related to each other. In the *Madhyama Carita*, she assumes her 'Durgā Mahiṣamardinī' form and in the *Uttara Carita* that of Kālikā and Kauśika. While, the *Pūrva Carita* conception of the Great Goddess does not get favour with the artists. It is only her 'Mahiṣamardinī' form and 'Kālikā' form that attracted popular worship.

It is by a dip in the Ganges that Pārvatī bifurcates her body into Kauśikī (*saumya*)[4] and Kālikā (*Āgnevī* or *ghora aṇu*).[5] The former is her auspicious form, whereas the latter is destructive.[6] *Liṅga Purāṇa* seems to teach that Kālī though produced by Pārvatī, was yet distinct from her and as the story goes a female *Asuro*, Daruka by name, consumed Gods and *Brāhmaṇas*; Viṣṇu could not kill her; then Śiva was approached, who appealed to Devī; and thus Pārvatī created from her own substance, a maiden of black colour, with matted locks, having an eye on her forehead with trident and skull who was Kali.[7] The *Adhyātmā Rāmāyaṇa* (ward ii, 16) gives a different origin, the object of the writer 'evidently being to enhance the glory of Sītā, by showing that Kālī was but a form that she had assumed'.[8] According to it when Rāma killed Rāvaṇa the latter boasted of his powers. Sītā then asked Rāma if he could kill Rāvaṇa with thousand heads. Rāma accepted the challange and marched to Śatdvīpa with his brothers and army (both monkeys and *dānavās*), but he was deprived of all, by the three arrows of the giant. Rāma began to weep and Sītā laughed at him. She herself then assumed the terrific form of Kālī and slew the Giant, drank his blood and then began to dance and toss about the limbs of the corpses. At last to cool her down Śiva had to lay himself on the ground. When Kālī caught sight of her husband

---

1. Payne, *The Śaktas*, p. 38-39.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 39 *cf.*; Muir *OST*, IV p. 433 f.
3. *Purāṇa*, V, No. 1, Jan. 1963, p. 69.
4. *Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 85.38.
5. *Ibid.*, 85.41.
6. *Purāṇa*, V., No. 1, p. 84.
7. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology*, p. 261.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

under her feet, she thrust out her tongue with shame and thus earth was saved. It is this form of Kālī which is most popular and widely worshipped, even to the present day. But in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki as Banerjea informs,[1] there is no clear mention of the Devī. The learned scholar further enlightens us that "the original *Rāmāyaṇa* does not mention the worship of the Devī by Rāma when he was in some difficulty about killing Rāvaṇa. In the 106th *Sarga* of the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* (Canto VI) the sage Agastya advises Rāma to recite the *Ādityahṛdaya*, a *stava* to propitate the Sun God, and after reciting it thrice, the hero could kill the demon. It is only in the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* by Kṛittivāsā, that the worship of the Sun is replaced by the worship of Durgā".[2] It may be due to the well established cult of Durgā in Bengal which survives to the present day. In the identification of Kālī with Sītā also lies a similar effort. By the time *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* was composed the cult of Kālī was well established. A seventh century work entitled '*Caṇḍīśataka*' also glorifies the Great Goddess Kali. In this work she is known by a number of names as we have already found in the case of the Great Goddess (Devī, Pārvatī or Durgā), such as Devī, Śivā, Pārvatī, *Kālī*, Ambikā, Kātyāyanī, Umā, Haimavatī Bhavānī, Bhadrakālī, Gaurī, Krṣamā, Caṇḍikā, Kālarātrī, Āryā, Śarvāṇī, and others.[3] During this period she appears to have found favour at the hands of a number of devotees as evident from Bāṇa's work. Therefore, the cult of Kālī appears to be a later development and her prominence may synchronise with the date of the composition of this work. According to this work she brings about the destruction of enemies.[4] *Kumārasambhava*[5] makes her the destructive counterpart of Mahākāla Śiva.

Whatever may be the origin of Kālī, she is decidedly a form of the Great Goddess and associated with Śiva and her nature is terrific. She found an important place in the *tantric* form of worship, where she had many forms.[6] Hopkins remarks that, 'The conception of Kālī is not a permanent being but she personified destruction and is liable to come into existance when virtue is lost.' Candi[7] who came to assist Kālī in the destruction of Raktabīja, was a form of Devī assumed by her on another occasion from the destruction of Caṇḍi according

1. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 492; Though in *Rāmāyaṇa* (chs. XXXVII, VV 5 ff) we find reference to the connubial intercourse of Śiva with Umā and the birth of Kārttikeya (Muir OST IV p. 364-65). It is interesting to find in the *Epics* the family life of Śiva and his spouse note always happiest, because they could bestow gifts on their worshippers separately and sometimes while one wanted to curse; the other wished to bless; *cf.* Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 226-28.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 492, f. no. 1.
3. Bana, *Caṇḍīśttaka*, I, p. 267; Saletore, *Life in Gupta Age*, p. 508-09.
4. *Ibid.*, XIV, p. 280.

. VII. 39.

6. Ennumerated in the Chapter dealing with the Tāntric form of worship.
7. *Epic Mythology*, p. 76.

to the *Skandapuārṇa.*[1] This shows that the cult of Caṇḍī was already prevalent and she was later on identified with Devī.[2]

Thus the cult of Durgā-Kālī, generally, dominates the Hindu pantheon, though Pārvatī, Gaurī or Umā are also worshipped, either jointly with Śiva or independently. Gopinath Rao informs that 'Durgā is often worshipped in the form of nine-figures, one of them being set up in the middle and the remaining eight in positions corresponding to the eight points of the compass'—each seated on a lotus, the middle one has eighteen hands while each of the rest has sixteen hands and the names of these Durgās are : Rudra-Caṇḍā, Pracaṇḍā, Caṇḍogrā, Caṇḍa-nāyikā, Caṇḍa, Caṇḍavatī, Candarupa, Aticandika, and Ugra-Candika (the central figure appears to be of Durga Mahisamardini—the description appears in *Skandayamala*).[3] The colour and the iconographical features of these Durgās also differ.

The position of the Great Mother Goddess is enhanced by the *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa* (*Devī Māhātmya* section), where it says that after the death of the demon king Mahiṣa all the gods headed by Indra began to praise Her, bending their necks in humility.[4] They lauded her thus : "We bow down with devotion before that goddess Ambikā, who stretched out of this world by her own power, in whom are impersonated the various energies (*śakti*) of all the gods, who is to be adored by all the deities and ṛishis; may she confer upon us blessings. May Chaṇḍikā whose unequalled majesty and might neither the divine Ananta (Viṣṇu) nor Brahmā, nor Hara (Śiva) is competent to express, determine upon the preservation of the world, and the destruction of the fear of evil".[5] Muir, therefore, observes that, 'These specimens may suffice to show the dignity to which this goddess has eventually been elevated in the estimation of her worshippers and she has attained now a higher rank in the Indian pantheon than was originally enjoyed by the daughter of Daksha and Himavat".[6] The name of the Great Goddess Durgā has been conceived as powerful, in the *Harivaṁśa*, that mere uttering of her name Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Sun, moon and wind...all the word is pronounced.[7]

---

1. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 260.
2. R.P. Chanda observes that, 'The primitive form of Durgā is the result of syncretism of a mountain-goddess worshipped by the dwellers of the Himālaya, and the Vindhyas; a goddess worshipped by the nomadic Ābhīra shepherds,—the vegetation spirit conceived as a female and a war-goddess. As her votaries advanced in civilization the primitive war goddess was transformed into the personification of the all-destroying time (Kālī)', *cf. Indo-Āryan Races*, p. 148.
3. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, p. 356-57; No less than nine forms of Durgā are mentioned in the *Āgamas*, nemely Nīlakaṇṭhī, Kṣemankarī, Harasiddhī, Rudrāmsā Durgā, Vana-Durgā, Agni-Durgā, Jaya-Durgā, Vindhyavāsī-Durgā, Ripumārī-Durgā (*Ibid.*, p. 342).
4. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 84.1.
5. Muri, *OST*, IV, p. 436.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 437.
7. *Harivamśa*, V, 10256, ff.

In the *Gauḍavaho* of Vākpati (8th Cent. A.D.) Goddess Vindhyavasini appears in double character and is in clear terms called non-Āryan Kālī and is at the same time declared to be a form of Pārvatī herself.[1] B.C. Majumdar, therefore, observes that, 'it appears that when Durgā was merely a non-Āryan tribal goddess her non-sanskritic name was also either Durgā or something which had a similar sound. The reason for this supposition is that for want of some orthodox grammatical explanation had to be thought out. Derivation of the name has been given in the following words : *Durgāt Tarayase Durge tat tvam Durgā Smṛitajanaiḥ* (IV. 6.20). Whether Durgā had an independent existence as a tribal goddess and only later became one and the same with Vindhayvāsinī in the process of evolution at the fusion of tribes, is not easy to ascertain. But that there was once a Kumārī Durgā, not belonging to the household of Śiva, is borne out by the interpolated stotras in the *Mahābhārata*.'[2]

In the conception of the Great Goddess two points are to be noted. She has a double character—one is [mild and the other is ferocious. One is beautiful and human-like with pleasant appearance, whereas the other is ferocious with aweful appearance. To us it appears that the first aspect is northern or Āryan whereas the second one is southern or non-Āryan. Umā, Pārvatī, Satī, etc., are primarily connected with Himavat, the great mountain of the north India whereas Durgā, Kālī, Caṇḍī, etc., essentially appear to be associated with Vindhyas, though finally, the Devī becomes Vindhyavāsinī. The final association of the Goddess with Vindhyas shows that the cult of the Mother Goddess had a strong hold in that area in the past. It was only when the two different cults of the Great Goddess were amalgamated that all were identified with each other. At a particular stage in the evolution of the Mother Goddess cult the two well-established cults of the Mother Goddess were merged into one.

It would be in the fitness of things to say that the Great Goddess (Devī-Durgā) as descrived in the Śiva Mahāpurāṇa where Dakṣa pays respects to his inborn baby, the Devī (Jagadambā) incarnate : Those who know Veda call her Śivā, Śāntā, Mahāmāyā, Yoganidrā, Jagannamayī, who appointed dhātā to create Jagaddhātrī Maheśvarī, who appointed Viṣṇu and Rudra for preservation and destruction[3] appears to rise above all.

ŚRĪ-LAKSMĪ

Śrī-Lakṣmī is the chief among Viṣṇu's consorts.[4] Originally Śrī and Lakṣmī appear to be two different goddesses at least in the *Brāhmaṇas* and the early

---

[1] *JRAS*, 1906, p. 357.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 358.

[3] *Śiva Mahāpurāṇa*, Ch. XIV. 29-32; *Matsya purāṇa*, Ch. 13.12-22. Here when Satī began to burn herself Dakşo went to her and prayed her as Jaganmātā who is present in all animate and in inanimate.

[4] Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, pp. 372-73.

Upanishads.[1] In the *Rāmāyaṇa* also the two goddesses are differentiated.[2] In the *Mahābhārata* also Śrī and Lakṣmī are distinctly mentioned[3] as both of them are said to be living in the palace of Indra along with Mahendrāṇī,[4] whereas in the *Śānti Parva* Śrī is also known as Lakṣmī.[5] And in all later works both are spoken of as identical. Even in the *Ṛigveda* (*Khilāni* 11.6) we do not find any difference between them. It is interesting to note that she was of no importance to the Vedic Āryans. In the Maurya-Śuṅga period she was represented in the form of *Sirimādevatā.*[6] Śrī-Lakṣmī had developed a definite cult of her own, long before the Gupta period. The *Milindpañho*[7] speaks of the followers of the mystical cults of the goddess of fortune (which was surely Śrī-Lakṣmī). However, the cult of Lakṣmī attained maturity only during the post-Kuṣāṇa period and is preserved in the *Purāṇas* and also in the *Epics*, though in the *Mahābhārata* it appears that her position in the Hindu pantheon and relationship with other gods was not yet fixed. It is only in the *Purāṇas* that she was clearly and exclusively associated with lord Vishṇu. The *Epics* show a nascent stage of her conception. On the other hands the *Purāṇas* instal her on the highest throne in a fully matured conception.

In the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* we come across several accounts of her origin. The most popular among them is her origin from the milky ocean at the time of the churning it. According to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, on her appearance the sages were enraptured, the heavenly cloistors sang her praises and the celestial nymphs danced before her, Gaṅgā and other sacred streams followed her, heavenly elephants poured water over her, and the sea of milk presented a wreath of unfading flowers and she cast herself upon the breast of Hari.[8] The *Rāmāyaṇa* gives a beautiful description of her.[9] Here no doubt she has been associated with Viṣṇu but this effort appears to be very late. In the beginning, perhaps, the cult of Śrī-Lakṣmī was independent of Viṣṇu. We have seen that in the Buddhist sources Śrī appears as a daughter of Dhatarāṭṭa, the king of the North. In the *Mahābhārata* we find several accounts. She is the daughter of Brahmā,[10] also daughter of Dakṣa.[11] In the *Ādi Parva*, however, her sea-origin[12] is mentioned. Lakṣmī

---

1. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*. p. 214.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa*, III. 46.17. Rāvaṇa when struck by Sītā's beauty, asks her whether she is Śrī, Hari, Kīrtti or Lakṣmī or some *apasarā*.
3. *Mbh.* III. 37.33 (Bombay Ed.).
4. *Ibid.*, III. 7.28.
5. *Ibid.*, XII. 225.8; *Viṣṇudharmottara* (I.41.14), calls Lakṣmī Vaiṣṇavī Sakti and equates her Śrī with *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti*.
6. Here she is holding bunch of lotuses.
7. *SBE*, XXXV, p. 266; *Milinda Pañho*, IV. 4.6.
8. Wilson, *The Vishṇu Purāṇa*, p. 61-70.
9. *Rāmāyaṇa*, i, 204.
10. *Mbh.* I.60.50.
11. *Ibid.*, I.60.13.
12. *Ibid.*, I.16.34.6.

appears to be very lately adopted by the Vaiṣṇavites. She is associated with Kubera[1] and Indra[2] in the beginning. In the *Śānti Parva* it is mentioned that Śrī desisted the *asuras* and came to live with Indra. In the *Mahābhāṛata* we have seen that Draupadī was an incarnation of Lakṣmī, and Arjuna of Indra.[3] These references show that till then Lakṣmī or Śrī was not associated with Viṣṇu, rather she was a deity popular with the *Asuras* or *Gandharvas*. She is first transferred to Indra and then finally in the *Purāṇas* to Viṣṇu. In the *Purāṇas*[4] it is said that Śrī went to Viṣṇu on her own accord. And before her final unification with Viṣṇu there was a state of uncertainty and confusion in determining a suitable place for this goddess in the Hindu Pantheon.

We have seen that prior to her association with Śrī-Laksmi was associated with Kubera and Indra. She was also associated with Kārttikeya. The *Mahābhārata*[5] declares that when Skanda married Devasenā, Lakṣmī herself in her incarnate form dwelt with him. On an Yaudheya coin, Kārttikeya is shown on the obverse and on reverse goddess Lakṣmī appears standing on a lotus.[6]

The first syncretic movement in the field of religious thought and the connected art motif, concerning, this great goddess can be noticed in the Kuṣāṇa age when we find on a small slab (belonging to early Kuṣāṇa period) the figures of Ardhanarisvara Śiva, Viṣṇu, Gaja-Lakṣmī and Kubera together.[7] It is, therefore, clear that the incorporation of Śrī-Lakṣmī into Vaiṣṇavism is a late development, which was perfected in the late Kuṣāṇa age or the early Gupta age. For in the *Bhagavatagītā* (X.34), she is reckoned as a manifestation of Viṣṇu among women along with Kīrti, Vāc, Smṛiti, Medhā, Dhṛiti and Kṣamā.[8] Though in the *Purāṇas* and in the *Epics* also Śrī appears to be born from the ocean and of her own accord came over to Viṣṇu, the *Rājadharma* section of the *Mahābhārata* declares her direct origin from Viṣṇu's forehead.[9] Her association with Viṣṇu is fully established in

---

1. *Mbh.*, II.10.18. She attended the court of Kubera; She dwells with Vaiśravana (Kubera) (*Rāmāyana* V.9.8). The dwarfish attendant with money bags on the Basarhseal can be taken to be Kubera (*ASIAR, 1903-04*, Seal nos. 3,5,6,9 Bloch identifies it as Kubera). Dr. Banerjea, takes it to be *Yakṣas cf. DHI*, pp. 194-95.
2. *Ibid.*, XII. Ch. 218. 11.13. Here Garuda is made the *Vāhana* used by Lakṣmī.
3. *Ibid.*, I. 189. 29.33.
4. *Vi. p.* I.9.105; *Visṇudharmottara*, I.41.1.
5. *Mbh.*, III, 219.48.
6. Allan, *Catalogue of Coins of Ancient India in the British Museum*, p. 270. This coin belongs to III Class II (dated in the late 2nd Cent. A.D.).
7. Agrawala, V.S., *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art.*, (U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow, 1951) p. IX.
8. मृत्युः सर्वंहरश्चम्हमुद्भूश्च भविष्यताम् ।
   कीर्तिः श्रीवक्चि नारीणां स्मृतिर्येधाः क्षमा ।।

   Śrī is also mentioned among the deities of Vaiṣnava pantheon along with Sarasvatī; Tusṭi; and Puṣṭi. *cf. Budh. Dh. Sūtra*, II, 5.9.10.
9. *Mbh.*, XII. 59. 131-4. She was born from a golden coloured lotus which sprang from the Viṣnu's forehead.

the Gupta period. The *Rāmāyaṇa* refers to her as the wife of Viṣṇu,[1] and the *Purāṇas*[2] give an account of it. According to it Śrī was the daughter of Bhṛigu and Khyāti and was given in marriage to Nārāyaṇa. It is interesting to note that in the *Amarakośa* one of the names of Viṣṇu is Śrīpati and that of Lakṣmī Haripṛiyā.[3] It is without doubt that by this time Lakṣmi was closely and firmly associated with Viṣṇu as his consort. It may be noted that she is not his *Śakti* (but Vaiṣṇavī who is appearing in the Sapta-Matṛikā group) but his consort to figure along with Viṣṇu or assuming an independent cult of her own. It is in this independent aspect that she is a great Mother Goddess. Till today she is worshipped by people on a particular day, on the day of *Lakṣmī Pūjā—Dīpāvali.*

In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* Lakṣmī or Śrī is described as 'Supreme Mother goddess' with epithet Jaganmātā.[4] In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* she is called Ambikā.[5] Lakṣmī in the *Purāṇas* has also been called with epithets such as *Vedagarbhā*, *Yajñagarbhā*, *Sūryagarbhā*, *Deva garbhā*, *Daitya*[6] *garbhā*, etc. In this aspect she appears too be nearer to the Vedic goddess, Aditi and Diti together in conception. The conception of Śrī as preserved in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*' seems to suggest the *Samhitā* doctrine of Śrī as a creative principle and also the later Vaiṣṇava doctrine of Śrī as an intermediary in the matter of salvation.'[7] However, in the other *Purāṇas* she appears merely as a consort of Viṣṇu.[8] On the other hand in popular belief she is regarded as the goddess of love, beauty, and prosperity and when a man is growing rich, it is said that Lakṣmī has come to dwell with him, whilst those in adversity are spoken of a forsaken of Lakṣmī.[9]

The goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī and Puṣṭi-Sarasvatī could not become the sole monopoly of a particular creed, rather they came to be respected by all religious creeds.[10] Banerjea observes that the principal idea underlying the conception of the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī is that of good fortune or luck which brings in blissful prosperity and abundance'.[11] It was due to this nature she got wide popularity. We have already seen elsewhere that in shaping her ideology and form, folk-element played a great part.[12]

---

1. *Rāmāyaṇa* (Griffith Trans.) i-204, page 66 note.
2. *Visnu Purāṇa*. I.8.65; *Viṣṇudharmottara*, 107. 72. f.
3. *Amarakosa*, I. 1.18.1; I.1.27 f.
4. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, VIII, 15.28.
5. *Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, LXXXIV, 1. ff.
6. Das, S.K., *Śakti or Divine Power*, p. 42.
7. Kumarappa, *Hindu conception of the deity*, p. 104, fn.-1.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology* (V & P.), p. 111.
10. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 370.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

In the Gupta period the iconographical development of the goddess appears to be complete. On the Gupta coins she invariably appears either standing on lotus, or sitting on throne. Here she appears to be considerably influenced by Ardoxo.[1] The goddess is shown holding a noose in the right hand and cornucopia in the left but the latter has been replaced by lotus bud in one case,[2] showing thereby that the process of identifying Ardoxo with Lakṣmī was nearing completion.[3] On the standard type of Samudragupta's coins[4] we find a goddess seated on a high-backed throne, holding a fillet (noose) in her outstretched right hand and a cornucopia, the symbol of fertility, in the left resting on her left shoulder; her pendant feet resting on a circular mat. Such seated goddess can also be noticed on his Archer[5] and Battle-Axe[6] types of coins and also on the standard[7] and few Archer type[8] coins of Chandragupta II. It is interesting to note that on the Battle-Axe type of his coins the mat under the goddess is replaced by a lotus which is an step towards the Indianisation of the motif.

The *Viṣṇudharmottara* gives instruction for making images of Brahma-Lakṣmī, Rāja-Śrī, besides the principal image of Śrī Lakṣmī'.[9] The Rāja-Lakṣmī aspect of the goddess may be noticed on Gupta coins where the goddess holds a ribbon or a towel,[10] because the corona with long ribbon symbolises royalty. Brahma-Śrī is also referred to in the *Brahmāṇḍa*[11] *Purāṇa*, and *Parama Saṃhitā*.[12] *The Mahābhārata* also speaks of Kṛiṣṇa's encounter with *ṛisis*, who were endued with Brahma—Śrī, or holy lusture.[13]

The Gaja-Laksmī conception of the earlier period got represented during this period also. Some seals from Basarh noticed by T. Bloch[14] bear Gaja-Lakṣmī figure. The Gaja-Lakṣmī type also occurs on the medieval coins. On the coins of Śaśāṅka and Jaya[1] we find her representation. A Basarh[2] seal shows her amidst a group of trees with elephants pouring water over her. She is found associated with a dwarf attendant on the seal of '*Śreṣṭhi-Sārthavāha-Kulika-Nigama*' (guild of merchants and bankers).[3] The Gaja-Lakṣmī representation is also found on the stone sculptures of the Gupta period. An early Gupta sculpture from Eran[4] shows the goddess being associated by a pair of elephants. True to the universality of her cult in many medieval temples of Orissa, the Gaja-Lakṣmī motif was carved in the centre of the architrave over the door way of the main structure, to whatever affiliation the shrine might be.[5] At Ellora, the presence of two Nāgas below her lotus seat is quite interesting.[6]

---

[1] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 194; Altekar, A.S., *Catalogue of the Gupta Gold coins in the Bayana Hoard*, p. LXVI, pl. V 6.

[2] *Ibid.*, pl. V. 6.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. LXVI; Whitehead, R.B., *PMC*, I, p. 212, pl. XIX. 236 & 237.

[4] Altekar, *op. cit.*, pls. I, 11-15 and III.

[5] *Ibid.*, pls. V 15; VI. 1-2.

[6] *Ibid.*, pl. V, 7-14.

[7] *JNSI*, 1947, p. 146, pl. VII 3.

[8] Altekar, *op. cit.*, pls. VIII. 6.9.10, 13-15; IX. 1,3-5.

[9] *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III, 82 (Stella Kramerisch's Translation p. 107) other forms of Lakşmī are Svarga Lakşmṭ and Jaya-Lakşmī.

[10] *JUPHS*, XXI. 1948 p. 27.

[11] III. 17.15.

[12] XV. 30.1; It states that one who wishes to attain the wealth of learning must worship Brahma-Śrī and offer oblations white lotuses, and one who desires to obtain Kşatriya-Śri must offer red lotuses.

[13] *MBH*, V, 83. 60; Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 178.

[14] *ASIAR*, *1903-04*, p. 107 ff. pl. XL & XLI.

Lakṣmī is also found associated with Garuḍa on seals from Bhita.[7] Her association with Kubera was there in the earlier period and she continued to be associated with Kubera even in the Gupta period. It is perhaps her this association which ultimately made her the goddess of wealth and riches. It is confirmed by her representations on the coins. On the Arcer type coin of Chandragupta[8] II and Kumāragupta[9] I the goddess is seen scattering round objects by her right hand. Most probably these are coins. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[10] also speaks Lakṣmī as the presiding deity of *padma*, *Mahāpadma*, *makara*, *Kachchchapa*, *Mukunda*, *nīla*, *ānanda* and *Śaṅkha*.

It can, therefore, be said that the cult of Śrī-Lakṣmī was pre-dominant during Gupta age, though it never assumed independence. She was always associated with Viṣṇu. Epigraphic evidences corroborates this. The *Gwalior Inscription* of Mihiratenla records the construction of a sun temple which is claimed to exist as long as Śrī adorns the bosom of Viṣṇu[11]. *Junagadh Rock Inscription* of Skandagupta refers to Śrī-Lakṣmī's union with Viṣṇu, the latter being the permanent abode of the former[12]. *The Apsad Inscription* of Ādityasena also speaks of Śrī as the wife of Vāsudeva.[13] Kālidāsa describes her as sitting on lotus caressing the

---

1. Allan, *BMC-GD*, pp. 148-151.
2. *ASIAR 1903-04*, p. 107, Seal No. 3.
3. *Ibid*, Seal no. 4.
4. *IAR*; L 1950-51, p. 62, pl. LXXI. A.
5. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 375.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 375-76, pl. XVIII, fig. 2; Banerjea observes that they are like the two Nāga chiefs, Nanda and Upananda, of the Buddhist mythology [connected with the Great Miracle of Sarasvati, are supporting as it were, the lotus on which the goddess is seated'.
7. *ASIAR*, *1911-12*, pls. XVIII-XIX.
8. Altekar, A.S. *op. cit.*, pls. VIII, 4, 5; IX. 5.
9. *Ibid.*, pl, XX. 13.
10. *Markandeya Puraṇa*, Ch. 68. 4.
11. Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, p. 402.
12. Fleet. *Corpus Inscription-um Indicarum*, No. 14, line 1.
13. *Ibid.*, No. 79, Line 4.

feet of Lord Visnu.[1] The popularity and the subordination of her cult is clear. and in the early Gupta Art and Architecture Vaiṣṇava deities and motifs dominate every where.

The goddess Piṣṭapurī or Piṣṭa-Burikā mentioned in some early 6th century A.D. inscriptions of Vaiṣṇava Saṃksobha and Sarvanātha has been identified with Lakṣmī by Fleet[2]. It is no wonder that Śri-Lakṣmī in course of her evolution acquired features of many tribal and local goddesses.

Thus the Śrī-Lakṣmī cult passed through a long chain of metamorphosis. Śrī and Lakṣmī two different goddesses were amalgamated into one and finally made over to Viṣṇu. Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī both appear together with Viṣṇu in the medieval sculptures and such representations are found all over India. The images of this type were prepared in numbers during the Pāla period[3]. She was also identified with the *Śakti* of Viṣṇu. Yet she was to be identified with the manifestation of All Powerful Great Goddess—Devī. This was also arrived at with the culmination of the evolution of the *Śākta*, ideals. We notice this in the *Devī-Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. Here we find an attempt to explain the identification of different goddesses with Devī. A similar is the explanation of the Mātrikās attempted in the *Varāha Purāṇa*.

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* declares : "The Guptarūpi Devī, that is, the Devī who is unmanifested, takes the three forms of Lakṣmī, Mahā Kālī, and Sarasvatī, represent Rājasa, the Sāttvika and the Tāmasa attributes or guṇas of prakṛiti...as giver of wealth and prosperity. She is Lakṣmī'.[4]

BHŪDEVĪ

From very remote past Earth was worshipped in some form or the other as a Great Mother in India and outside as well. In the *Vedas* she is Pṛithivī conceived as goddess and one full hymn is devoted to her in the *Atharvaveda*. Thus the divinity of Earth is proved without doubt, though the conception varies from age to age.

In the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* also the tradition of her divinity is preserved. She has been generally associated with Viṣṇu. In the *Purāṇaś* Bhūmā[5] Devī (the Vedic Earth Spirit) is one of the consorts of Viṣṇu. And in south Indian metal images, Viṣṇu is frequently represented as standing in the centre with Lakṣmī Devī on one side and Bhūmā Devī on the other.[6] Her Association with Viṣṇu is quite interesting. Prior to this find she was associated with Lord Buddha who referred to Earth as an witness to his attaining enlightenment. In the Pali sources as already referred the conception of Earth as a goddess was definitely known, because she appeared in the form of a lady.

---

[1] *Reghuvamṣaṃ*. X, 8.

[2] Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 116 and 132.

[3] Patna Museum Arch. Nos. 10609, 10610 and 6361.

[4] Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, pp. 334-35.

[5] Earth spirit of Vedic times, receives offerings according to the prescriptions of the *Gṛihya-sūtras*.

[6] *IHQ*, XIX, March 1943, No. 1, Page 10.

Wilson informs about an interesting account for the name prithivi of the Earth and speaks of it as a female. According to it when King Pṛithu marched to assail Earth, she addressed Pṛithu—'know you not king of men, the sin of killing a female, that you thus perseveringly seek to slay me' and the Earth was known as Pṛithivī as she was granted life by Pṛithu who thus became her father.[1] The *Viṣṇu Purāṇā* preserves the tradition of Viṣṇu's association with Pṛithivī as the latter was produced from the sole of the farmer's foot.[2] The earth, was the mother, the nurse, the receptacle and nourisher of all extant things.[3] She is also called Mādhavī, as she is the bride of Mādhava-Viṣṇu.[4] In the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* also she has been associated with Vīṣṇu and spoken of as a Great Mother. She has been called 'mother of all creation', 'the nursing mother' (*dhārtī*) and also a divine cow giving milk to her children.[5] She no doubt, therefore, appears as a great goddess in the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* and her association with Viṣṇu is well established. We also noticed that there is a marked similarity between Viṣṇu and the Earth Goddess. Both of them have similar function—*i.e.*, preservation. Viṣṇu sleeps on snake, similarly Earth Goddess has been associated with snakes. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa* when Earth was called upon three times by Sītā to hide her, 'the divine Earth rose on a seat supported by the Nāgas and bore Sītā down to the depths (*rasātalam*)'.[6]

In the south Indian images Viṣṇu has been invariably shown attended by Śrī Devī and Bhūdevi holding 'besides a flywhisk, a lotus and a nilot pale respectively; this characteristic has its textual basis in the *Vaikhānasa agma*[7]. In north India images instead of Bhūdevī we find Puṣṭi-Sarasvatī.[8]

Lord Buddha's enlightenment is associated with goddess Earth. In the Gupta period we have representations of Vasundharā[9] as well as Pṛthvī in the *Buddhism*

---

1. Wilson, *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, p. 103.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 103-105. *Harivaṃśa* gives a different association. Earth originally was without means of productivity as ruined by the poison of the great Serpent and after undergoing penance was sustained by Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu supplies the deficiency and makes her fruitful. *Cf.* Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 80-81.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
5. *Mob*, III, 200.70.
6. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 80.
7. Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 30.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
9. The figures of Vasundharā in terracotta may be taken to have been represented right from the Suṅga period associatad with fish and jars. *Cf.* Agarwala, V.S., *A catalogue of the Brahmaṇical Images*, p. XI, fig. 127, 748, 1411, 1695 and 2523.

and *Brahmaṇism* representation of the Gupta images in the Sarnath Museum, the goddess is not represented as wringing out her hair.[1] Rather, in the representation of the enlightenment scene of Lord Buddha, a female figure is shown 'emerging up to the middle of waist from the Earth with a treasure vase in both hands. She is identified as the earth goddess summoned by the Buddha seated in *Bhūmi sparśāmudrā*'. Here the representation is not of goddess but of *prithvī* represented as a lady. Similarly in the early Brahmaṇical representation[2] of Prithvi she looks to be more human than divine. The scene of Varāha-avatāra in Udayagiri caves (*C*. 400 A.D.) near Vidisha, the women personifying Prithivi, the earth goddess appears to be hanging helplessly from the right tusk of a boar-faced human figure. The vigor and action of this colossal Varāha shows as if actually a great effort was made in raising the goddess from the depths of primaeval sea. The depiction of Udayagiri is quite in conformity with the account given by Kalidāsa.[3] A similar theme is represented in Pallava[4] art. Here, earth goddess is definitely associated with Viṣṇu. Gopinath Rao thinks that this association of the goddess Earth with Viṣṇu is due to his boar incarnation.

It would not be out of place to discuss here the *Purāṇic* myth regarding the Boar incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. According to *Agni-Purāṇa*, there was an *asura*-chief named Hiraṇyākṣa who vanquished gods and took possession of their heavenly treasures and ultimately Viṣṇu had to slay the demon in the form of Boar.[5] The *Viṣṇu-Purāṇu*, the *Liṅga Purāna* and the *Garuḍa-Purāna* has mention Brahmā as the uplifter of the Earth from the Ocean; but at the same time they identify Brahmā with Viṣṇu.[6] The reference for the uplifting of pṛithivi as also found in the *Vedic* literature.[7] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions Emushā, a boar, having raised the earth up. Similarly *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* mentions a black boar, with hundred arms uplifting the earth.[8] The *Rāmāyaṇa*[9] and the *Mahābhārata*[10] both mention lifting up of the earth by Viṣṇu in his boar-incarnation. An important feature

---

1. *IHQ*., XIX, 1943, No. 1, fig. 9.
2. Agarwala, V.S., *A catalogue of* [*Brahmaṇical Images*, p. 65; *Catalogue of Sarnath Museum*, pl. XX.
3. *Raghuvaṃśam*, XIII. 8.
4. Rao, *EHI*, Vol. I, pl. XXXVI—'The Pallava artist has taken more care to emphasise the aspect of loving reunion between the god and his divine consort (Pṛithivi) than to lay stress on the forceful physical act of her deliverance by him; *cf*. Banerjea, *DHI*, 415, as we find the case of Udayagiri Varāha.
5. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, Pt. II, pp. 131-32.
6. *Ibid*., p. 129.
7. *Ibid*., p. 128.
8. *Ibid*., *EHI*, Vol. I-II, p. 128.
9. *Ibid*.
10. *Mbh*., III, 10.932 ff.

of this story is that earth was taken to be a bone of contention between the Devas and the *Asuras*. The goddess Pṛithivī (in whose divinity we should not doubt) was carried away by a demon. The story may have some allegorical significance. Pṛithivī, primarily means land and it was natural for the Āryans and the non-Āryan to struggle for it. The early history of the Āryans in India was definitely of constant struggle. Most probably this theme was represented allegorically in the latter literature. Here we may point out that the great goddesses were always a cause for struggle between *Suras* and the *Asuras*.

In south India there are several representations of this goddess in the medieval temples. Fine examples of the goddess are found in the Brahadisvara temple (an early eleventh century Chola temple at Thanjvaur, in the *bas-reliefs* on some Vijayanagore Viṭhalaswāmin temple, on Acyutarāya temple at Hampi and other temples at the same place. Her images are interesting. She is standing as if half-emerging from earth and wringing her hair and a swan drinking water falling from the tip of the hair falling down.[1] And only this feature, which does not appear in the Buddhist representations, distinguishes it from the Buddhist models. Still we may presume some borrowing.[2]

However, in art she has been given always a subordinate status in relation to Viṣṇu on whose help and mercy depended her entity. Bhūdevī and Śrī, therefore, flank on the either side of the image of Viṣṇu.

The *Viṣṇudharmottara* on the other hand gives the iconographic features in detail which is 'evidently that of the Goddess Earth when she is set up independently as a *Savyam-Pradhāna* object of worship and represents fully poetically all the characteristics of the earth, as the producer of plants, gems etc.' according to Rao.[3] But in India we do not preserve the tradition of her independent worship in anthropomorphic form, though she was considered all through a great Mother. To some extent, it can be said that different aspects of hers were anthoropomorphised differently and very little was left to give her only an independent status.

---

[1] IHQ., XIX, March 1943, fig. 9, On the *Gopuram* of Acyutarāya temple, Hampi. The half-emerging form of the Earth Goddess is perhaps due to the conception of the goddess residing beneath the surface of the earth. If surface be the head of the goddess, innumerable rivers would account for the conception of the wet hair, from which water drops fell. Swan is closely connected with water.

[2] In Burmese representation of Wasundhya which is a corrupt form of Vasnudharā the, Goddess is shown squeezing out her hair in the same manner, which suggests a Brahmaṇical influence.

[3] Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, II, I, p. 376. The *Visnudharmottara* describes her as white in complexion, having four hands, carrying *ratna-pātra* (a vessel fitted with gems), *Sasya-pātra* (a vessel containing vegetables), *oṣdhi-pātra* (a vessel containing medicinal herbs) and a lotus respectively; She should be seated upon the back of four *dig-gajas* or elephants of the quartus., *cf. Ibid.* p. 376.

SARASVATĪ

A river goddess of importance in the Rigvedīc period, Sarasvati has undergone considerable changes in her conception in the later times. She is now considered to be the goddess of wisdom and science and the mother of the *Vedas*—the sacred books of the Āryans. We have seen that it was probably due to her equation with *Vāc* that she became as such. In the *Purāṇas*, she is the consort of Brahmā, which is but natural since Brahmā is the source of all the *Vedas* and the knowledge. There are, however different stages in the saga of Sarasvatī's career as revealed through sculptures—a river goddess, a minor deity adoring Brahma or Viṣṇu and as a presiding deity in shrines and temples built for her.[1] In comparison to other major gods and goddesses, however, we have lesser number of temples dedicated to Sarasvatī and Brahmā; but special shrines or niches are set apart for this goddess in the temples of Viṣṇu and Gaṇeśa.[2]

In the Śuṅga period we find her representation on the railings of Bhārhut. This shows that by that time she occupied an important place in Buddhism and was associated with *vīṇā*, a characteristic iconographical feature of the goddess in the later period. In some sects of Buddhism she is associated with Manjūśrī, and perhaps with the adoption of entire gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon by Jainism and Buddhism, she also became one amongst them.[3] In the two different sects of Jainism (*svetambara* and *digambarā*) she presents a divinity of forms and names as śrutadevī and sixteen *Vidyādevīs*.[4]

Sarasvatī is also Sāvitrī and co-wife of Brahmā along with Gāyatrī. The *Padma Purāṇa* describes Sāvitrī and Gāyatrī living together amicably and the *Varāha Purāṇa* addresses Sarasvatī as Gāyatrī, Sarasvatī, Maheśvarī and also Sāvitrī.[5] The *Skanda Purāṇa* gives a detailed account of Sāvitrī's wrath which goes to explain many characteristic features of the gods and goddesses. It so happened in the sacrifice performed by Brahmā at Puṣkara lake that Sāvitrī could not come in time; other goddesses, *viz.* Lakṣmī, Bhavānī, Gaṅgā, Svāhā, Indrāṇī etc. were also late, Brahmā was therefore, angry and he ordered for another wife which was complied by Indra, who brought Gāyatrī to him. Brahmā said, 'I will spouse this Gāyatrī and she shall become the mother of three Vedas, and the cause of purity to these worlds'. But Sāvitrī appeared on the scene and cursed all assembled there. Brahmā was deprived of his worship in a temple, Rudra of manhood, Viṣṇu to endure the agony of wife's separation, Agni to devour all clean and unclean, the goddesses to become barren. However, this was modified by

---

1. *JIH*, XLI , pt. III, Dec. 1963, p. 681.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 583.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Wilkins, *H.M., V. & P.* p. 97.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 94-96.

Gāyatrī.[1] According to the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[2] Prajāpati (Brahmā) created all beings and then he produced a beautiful daughter. He was then himself felt drawn towards her and began praising her. And due to such a desire·for copulation with his own daughter (*sva-sutopagamecchayā*) lost all his virtue. The *Purāṇas*, further, explain that deeds and misdeeds of a god should not be judged by human standards of mortality.[3] Brahmā is said to have cursed the god of Love (Kāma), for not even sparing him from his shafts, to be burnt to ashes due to wrath of Rudra. Here again there is an efforts to interpret the old myth, and Prajāpati's daughter is said to be none else but Gāyatrī or Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech. Naturally these two *viz.* Brahmā (The lord of knowledge) and Sarasvatī (Gāyatrī the speech) would have a very intimate relationship'.[4] We now find a considerable change from the vedic myth. It is no more Brahmā himself who is victim of Rudra's wrath but it is now Kāmadeva, the god of Love. However in different context Rudra cuts Brahma's head as recorded in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*.[5] In the *Purāṇas* we find Prajāpati and Brahmā equated and also speech with his daughter and the father had the desire for his own daughter.[6]

The Vedic conception of Sarasvatī is adopted by the *Vāmana Purāṇa*[7] when it makes Vaśiṣṭha eulogise her as 'the goddess moving at will and producing water in the clouds' (त्वमेव कामशा देवि मेद्येषु सृजसे पय:). '*Vṛiṣṭi*' is one of the epithets of Sarasvati in the *Skanda Purāṇa*.[8] Water is life-giving energy. It is a symbol of fertility. Water is milk to the whole mankind as mother's milk is to the child. Both are indispensable. No life can exist without either of them. In this sense she is definitely a great Mother Goddess. In the *Purāṇas* the three aspects of the goddess, as found in the *Vedas*, are often mingled. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* praises Sarasvatī river as the 'mother of all the worlds' and 'the source or origin of the vedas'.[9] Similar idea is found in the *Padma Purāṇa*[10] also where she is identified with the goddess of various sciences or *vidyās*.

In thè *Purāṇas*, therefore, Sarasvatī definitely appears to be a great goddess, the conception here is decidedly a developed form from these vedic one. We come

---

1. Wilkins H.M., *op. cit.*
2. *Matsya Puraṇa*, *Sṛiṣṭi prakraṇa*, *adhyāya*, 3.31 ff.
3. *Ibid.*, *adhyāya* 4.6.
4. *Purāṇa*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1963, p. 41.
5. *Bhavisya Purāṇa*, I; we note here a rivalry between Brahmā and Śiva in which the latter triumphs.
6. *Purana*, Vol. V, No. 1, Jan. 1963, p. 43.
7. *Vāmaṅa Purāna*, 40.140.
8. *Skanda Purāṇa*, VI, 46. 28.
9. *Vāmana Purāṇa*, 32, 'त्वं देवि सर्वलोकानां माता वेदारणि: शुभा ।'
10. *Padma Purāṇa*, V, 27. 118, f.

across a number of epithets of this goddess in the *Purāṇic* literature which are explained differently. The *Bhāviṣya Purāṇa* and the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* have interpreted four such epithets.[1] The *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[2] gives the following explanation : '*Bhāratī*' because she went down to Bhārata; '*Brāhmī*' because she is the beloved of Brahmā; '*Vāṇī*' because she is the presiding deity of speech; and '*Sarasvatī*' because she belongs to god Sarasvān or Hari. The *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*[3] gives similar interpretation. Kālidāsa also considers Sarasvatī or Bhāratī identical and both denoting goddess of learning.[4]

As regards her origin, the *Purāṇas* preserve various accounts. According to *Bhaviṣya Puraṇa* and *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* goddess Sarasvatī is one of the five main forms which the *Mahā Prakṛiti* (the Primordial Nature) of the *Śakti* of Brahmā assumes at the times of creation of the universe according to the different functions of creation. The *Ātman* further assumed two forms—right half is known as *Puruṣa* and left half is known as *Prakṛiti.* Due to desire of Śrīkṛiṣṇa (=*Para Brahma*) *Prakṛiti* assumed five forms, viz. Durgā (the mother of Gaṇeśa), Rādhā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī.[5] She is further connected with the *Śakti* of Śrī Kṛiṣna by these *Purāṇas* and taken to be white-coloured girl (*Kanyā*) bearing a lute and a book ('वीणा पुस्तक धारिणी'). The *Vāyu Purāṇa*[6] on the other hand connected her with Śaṅkara though her origin is due to the wish of Brahmā. The male and the female among whom Śaṅkara divided himself, the female was having right half of a female which was white and the left half was black and Sarasvatī is one of the various manifestations of the white form (known as Gaurī).[7] The *Vāyu Purāṇa* also mentions her as an offspring of Brahmā (स्वयंभुव: प्रसूति:) which contained all (विश्वरुपा) and according to this *Purāṅa*

---

1. *Purāṇa*, Vol. IV, no. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 62-63.
2. *Devī Bhāgārvata Purāṇa*, IX. 7.2-3 :

   भारती भारतं गत्वा ब्राह्मी च ब्राह्मण: प्रिया ।
   वाण्यधिष्ठातृ देवी सा तेन वाणी प्रकृत्तिता ।।
   सरोवाप्यां च स्त्रोनस्तु सर्वत्रैव हि दृश्यते ।
   हरि: सरस्वान् तस्येयं तेन नाम्ना सरस्वती ।।

3. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, II 3.5.

   सर्वविश्वं परिव्याप्य्यं स्त्रोतस्मेव हि दृश्यते ।
   हरि: सरस्वान् तस्येयं तेन नाम्ना सरस्वती ।।

4. *Raghuvaṁśam*, IV; 6 *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 90.
5. *Purāṇa*, IV; No. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 65; *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, II. 1 ff; 4.4; *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, IX. 1. 1. ff.

   गणेश जननी दुर्गा राधा: लक्ष्मी सरस्वती । सावित्री वै सृष्टि विधौ प्रकृति: पञ्चधास्मृता ।।
   (Bhavisya Pu. II. 1.1.)

6. *Vāyu Purāṇa*, I.9.67. ff. Also *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1.7.10.
7. *Purāṇa*, IV, Jan. 1962, p. 65.

she also appeared in the form of '*gau*' having four mouths, four horns, four teeth, four eyes, and four hands.[1] This '*gau*' was no other than *Prakṛiti*, the source of the universe.[2] The *Lalitopākhyāna* portion of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* gives a different account.[3] According to it the Goddess Mahālakṣmī (also called Kāmākṣī or Tripurasundarī) produced three eggs. Girā (*i.e.* Sarasvatī) was born along with Śiva from one of these three eggs. From the other two remaining pair were born *viz.* Ambikā and Viṣṇu from one egg, and Śrī and Brahmā from the other. Goddess Mahālakṣmī, then combined Sarasvatī with Brahmā, Ambikā (Pārvatī) with Śiva and Śrī (Lakṣmī) with Viṣṇu.[4] A similar account is given in the *Prādhānika Rahasya* appended to the *Devi-Māhātamya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.* Goddess Mahālakṣmī endowed with three *gunas,* assumed also a *tāmasika* form known as Mahākālī, and also a *Sāttvika* form known as Sarasvatī (Mahāsarasvatī). Each of these three goddess—Mahālakṣmī, Mahā Kālī and Sarasvatī or Mahā Sarasvati—is said to have four hands (*Chatur Bhuja*). These goddesses created three pairs of deities—Brahmā and Śri were created by Mahālakṣmī, Rudra and *Trayī* by Mahā Kālī and Viṣṇu and Umā by Mahā Sarasvatī. Then Mahā-Lakṣmī gave *Trayī* (Sarasvatī) to Brahmā as his wife, Gaurī (Umā) to Rudra and Śrī to Vāsudeva.[5] The association of Sarasvatī and Śiva in these accounts is quite interesting. In Kālidāsa's works also we get such an association from the *Kumārasambhava.*[6] We learn that Sarasvatī went to Śiva after his marriage. Durgā as synonym of Vāk (वाक्) appears in the *Bṛihatsaṁhitā.*[7] Similar is the case with other confused association of consorts of the other members of the Hindu Trinity. It, therefore, appears that such an account of the origin of the goddess marks a confused stage of the development of Brahmanical religion.[8] We find in such a diverse account of the origin of Sarasvatī some sort of toleration preached and by a happy inspiration Sarasvati was converted into the wife of *Traipuruṣa* synthesis of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.[9] However, Sarasvatī decidedly appears to be a daughter of Brahmā as well as his consort.[10] Kālidāsa, also treats Sarasvatī to be Brahmā's consort.[1] Sarasvatī is associated with the mouth of Brahmā in the *Apṣād inscription* of Ādityasena.[2] One thing is significant to note here that these Purāṇic descriptions appear to explain the mere practices and beliefs of the common people. The *Purāṇas* mark the synthesis of different tales to wipe out all differences among the different groups and races who were absorbed into the broad framework of Hinduism with the original beliefs and practices.

---

[1] *Vāyu Purāṇa*, I, 23. 24, 34. ff.
चतुर्मुखी जगाद्योनि प्रकृतिर्गौः प्रकीर्त्तिता ।

[2] *Purāṇa*, IV, Jan. 1962, p. 66.

[3] *Brahmana Purāṇa*, IV, 40.5. ff.

[4] *Purāṇa*, Vol. IV; No. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 66.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 90.

[7] *Bṛihat Saṁhitā*, LXVIII, 38.

[8] Such a confused stage may be veiled attempt to show that beneath all these variations the unity or uniformity persists.

[9] Bhattacharya, *Sarasvati the Goddess of learning*, p. 50 (G.O.S. class-B, No. 7).

[10] She is देहसंसूता (*Matsya Purāṇa, Adh.* 3.30 ff). *cf.* Also *Bhavisya Purāṇa*, III, 12.28; *Brahmānda Purāṇa* II. 35.44; *Brahma Purāṇa* 101.4;102.2; *Skanda Purāṇa* VII. 33. 16f; 20f; 35.17; etc.

We come across a number of attributes of this goddess and a large number of epithets,[3] mentioned in the *Purāṇas*. In the *Purāṇas* she has been called वाग्देवी, वाग्देवता, वाग्वादिनी (*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* II-4-5); स्मृतशक्ति, ज्ञानशत्ति, कल्पनाशक्ति (*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* II. 4.5.) श्रद्धा, परा, निष्ठा, सिद्धि (*Padma Purana* V. 28.116); विद्या, महाविद्या त्रय, वेदगर्भा (*Pradhānika Rahasya*); सर्वंलोकानो माता (*Vāmana Purāṇa* 32.6); जगद्धानी (*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 23.30); जगन्माता, जगदम्त्रिका, सदम्बिका, शलिरापिणी (*Bhavisya Purāṇa* II. 4.5); सिनी वाली, कुहू, राका (*Skanda Purāṇa* VI. 46.27); प्रक्रित, गौ (*Vāyu Purāṇa* I.23.50).[4] Sūrya has also been taken to be her husband "presumably because he dispels the gloom of the outer world and Sarasvatī does of the inner world and the twin Aśvina as the sons of Sūrya and Sarasvatī—Vāka."[5]

The *Purāṇas* definitely preserve proofs of Sarasvatī's wife worship. It was Brahmā, the creater Himself who first of all worshipped this goddess and after that she was worshipped by all the gods, sages and men in the three worlds.[6] In one of the Purāṇas Sarasvatī is being said to have been first of all worshipped by Viṣṇu[7] whereas in another Śiva (*Sthānu*) worshipped Sarasvatī and installed her in the form of *Liṅga* at the Sthānutīrtha.[8] Hence the Purāṇas conceived that these great gods were the first worshippers of Goddess Sarasvatī and thereby attached much importance to her worship.[9]

There is no doubt we have a continuity of her history of worship preserved in literature right from the Vedic age down to the Purāṇas. In the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* also we have some reference to the iconographical representation of *arcās* of the goddess Sarasvatī[10] King Yudhiṣṭhira is said to have visited the sacred

---

1. *Kumārasambhava*. II, 3.
2. Fleet, *CII*, Vol. III, p. 200. Śrī is associated with the breast of Viṣṇu.
3. ऋतावरी, वाजिनीवती, मरुत्वती, हिरण्यवर्त्तनि । पावीरवी, वृत्रहंनी etc. have been used as epithets of Sarasvatī in the *Rigveda*.
4. *Purāṇa*, IV, No. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 69.
5. Bhattacharya, H., *Sarasvati, The Goddess of learning*. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, XII. Rupa and Bala are the sons.
6. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, II.1.195 also *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, IX.1.151. 1-152 p.
7. *Padma Purāṇa*, V, 27.146, f.
8. *Vāmana Purāṇa*.
9. *Purāṇa*, Vol. IV. No. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 85.
10. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, No. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 82.

āyātanas or temples of Sarasvatī on the sea-coast.[1] According to the *Skanda Purāṇa*[2] a king named Ambuvīci installed a *Chaturbhuja* earthen *pratima* of Goddess Bhāratī at a place situated in Gujarāta (in Habakeśvara Kṣetra modern Bāḍanagara) and that place was known as *Sārasvata-Tīrtha*. As already mentioned the *Vāmana Purāṇa* mentions the installation of Sarasvatī in *liṅga* form by God Sthānu (Śiva) himself. The *Skanda Purāṇa*[2] further mentions that Sarasvatī installed himself as holding the *Vaḍavānala* or the submarine fire, south-east of Someśvara, at Prabhosa, it enjoins the worship of *Vaḍavnānala—Dhārinī pratimā* of Sarasvatī; on account of this *pratimā* the place was known as the *Agni-Tīrtha*.[3] The *Skanda Purāṇa* repeatedly associated the worship of Sarasvatī with the sea-coast. It is no wonder, she primarily was the goddess worshipped by the people residing on the sea-coast probably in Gujarat. And in the later period she was absorbed into the Brahmaṇical fold.

The goddess has some characteristic iconographical features. According to the *Agni Purāṇa*[4] her *pratimā* should have *pustaka*, *akṣamālā* and *vīnā* in her hands. Her *vāhana* should be swan or lotus like Brahmā.[5] Swan is generally taken to be the *vāhana* of goddess Sarasvatī. A Gupta style gold coin, dating from 6th-7th Cent. A.D. has figure of a goddess on its reverse, holding a lotus and at her feet a *haṃśa* is shown. Smith takes it to be a peacock. Allan[6] identifies this goddess to be Lakṣmī, whereas Banerjea[7] takes this figure to be Sarasvatī and the *vāhana* to be *haṃśa*. There is an interesting image of Sarasvatī from Bengal which differs in usual iconographical features and instead of swan as *vāhana* we have a frisking ram,[8] while her arms carry *vīṇa*, *pustaka* and *akṣamālā* as usual. The change in *vahana* is variously explained. Rams and ewes are closely associated with Sarasvatī.[9] It may be suggested that since she is the holder of *Vaḍvānala i.e.*, she is associated with the(*vāhana* of Agni) the *vāhana* ram is provided instead of swan. It is interesting to note that this goddess has been provided with a variety of *vāhanas*. Besides swan and ram she has been also shown seated on peacock (in

---

1. *Mbh*, III, 118. 9ff.
2. *Skanda Purāṇa*, VI, 46.12 ff.
3. *Purāṇa*, IV, no. 1, p. 82; *Skanda Purāṇa*. VII, 34.32.
4. *Agni-Purāṇa*, 50.16.

   'पुस्तकाक्षमांलिका हस्ता वीणा हस्ता सरस्वती'

   The association of *Vīnā* with the goddess is as old as Buddhist period. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, also describes similar to Agni Purāna. The Hoyasala Sculptures are of this fashion. *Cf*. Rao, *EHI*, I-II, pl. CXVI, f. 1.
5. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 260.40.
6. Allan, *CGC*, *BM*., p. 150, pl. XXIV.
7. *IHQ*, XIV, no. 2, June 1938, p. 307.
8. Majumdar, *Hist. of Bengal*, I, p. 440, pl. XXII, f. 175.
9. *Ibid*, p. 440; *Satapatha Brahmaṇa*, xii, 7.1.3. and 14; xii. 7.2.3 and 7.

south India images)[1] and lion (in the image now in the British Museum, installed at Dhar by the great Paramāra King Bhoja).[2] So many different *vāhanas* may suggest their being conceived of the goddess as belonging to different schools of jainism. She is Śrutadevī (*i.e.*, the goddess of the *Vedas*) and according to the *Śvetāmbaras* her *vāhana* is swan, whereas according to the *Digambara* it is peacock.[3] In the Jain Iconography[4] *Vidyādevīs* or goddess of learning is most original and in no other Indian religion the goddess of learning are so numerous. The images of Śrutadevī has been found at Deogarh and also from Pullu (Bikaner District). Not only in Jainism but in Buddhism[5] also this goddess found its representation which we shall deal while dealing with the *Tantric* goddesses.

Iconographical representation of Sarasvatī we get in abundance in the Gupta period. On the coins of Samundragupta (Lyrist type) Sarasvatī is represented nimbate seated to the left on a wicker stool holding fillet in right and cornucopia in the left hand.[6] Some have identified her with Lakṣmī also as she usually appears on the Gupta gold coins. But on the coins of this variety of Samudragupta the goddess may be Sarasvatī. Vīṇā is associated with this figure, and the king himself was playing on a lyre. Similarly the goddess on the coins of Kumāragupta I of 'Tiger Slayer' type, is identified with Durgā, her *vahana* is peacock and she may also be taken to be Sarasvati.[7] Goddess Sarasvatī in *tribhaṅga* posture is on the reverse of one of the *Rājalīlā* type of coins of Samācāradeva (*c.* 550-573 A.D.). Here the goddess is standing on a lotus and by the right hand draws up another lotus in front of her face and there is a swan trying to snatch a lotus leaf in front by its open beak.[8] From the caves of Wijasan, we get a four-armed statue of Sarasvatī holding a book and a lute (vīṇā).[9] At Mahivara a basement of an old temple now remains and there is a statue of a goddess under her name Śarddhā Devī, represented as usual with four arms sitting on a *Hamśa* or goose. She is also holding *vīṇa* and *pustaka* in her hands. A beautiful two-armed stone image of Sarasvatī belonging to the Pāla period may be mentioned here.[10] The famous Alla is said to have given especial worship to Śnadda Devī and to have built her temple.[1]

---

[1] *JIH*, XLI, III, p. 685.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 690; *The History and Culture of Indian People*, V, p. 658 in this image a lion is shown instead of swan and a damsel trampling on the lion.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 686.

[4] Bhattacharya, B.C., *Jain Iconography*, p. 164; Sixteen *Vidyādevīs* Rohinī, Prajnapti, Vajraśrinkhalā Vajrakusā, Apratichakrā Puruṣadattā, Kālī, Mahākālī, Gaurī, Gāndhārī, Mahājwālā or Jwālāmukhī Mānavī, Vairoti, Achyatāpa, Mānasī, Mahāmānasī.

[5] Sarasvatī has five different forms in Buddhist Iconography like Manjusrī and Prajnā-Pārumitā *viz.* Mahāsarasvatī; Vajravīnā-Sarasvatī, Vajrasārada; Aryā, Sarasvatī and Vajra-Sarasvatī.

[6] *JIH*, XLI, III, S.N. 123, p. 690.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 690; Altekar, *The coinage of Gupta Empire*, 328.

[9] *ASIR*, IX, p. 125.

[10] Sinha, B.P., *Bharatiyā Kala Ko bihar ki denā*, p. 131, fig. 102.

The representation of Sarasvatī became very popular in the mediaeval period. A fine example is found in the temple at Gadag.[2] The goddess is sitting in *Padmāsana* and in front side of the slab constituting *Pīṭha*, a pretty swan is depicted amidst women in dance posture on both the sides. Another example of this art is at Bagali.[3] We also come across a six-armed image of Sarasvatī in the western Chālukyan style of the 10th Century[4] A.D. In Hoyasala art we have the representation of dancing Sarasvatī represented of *Vīnādhara*[5] type. It idea might be to show here her being Śakti of Śiva.[6] In the temple art of Thanjāvur and Gāṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram (Chola Art) we find the image from the latter most graceful. Another image of Sarasvatī from the Bṛihadīśvara temple at Thanjavur is of larger size and of forceful execution.[7] This image is also suggested to be representing Lalitā.[8] The goddess playing on a *vīnā*, has also been found from Madurā of Nayaka school.[9] Sarasvatī along with other river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā occur between the columns of the entrance porch of Kailasa temple of Ellora. Gopinath Rao also refers to such a triple-headed goddess representing Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī—on the head of Śiva in Gaṅga—dharamūrti stone panel, as a gigantic and rare workmanship.[10]

J.N. Banerjea[11] refers to a circular seal (No. 18) from Bhita which contains a vase (*Bhadraghaṭa*) on pedestal, below which is written in Gupta characters, Sarasvatī and observes that 'the goddess of learning is thus represented here by means of the *ghaṭa* emblem'. But we do not have any other evidence to support that such symbolic worship of the goddess was prevalent, though the possibility cannot be ruled out.

We, therefore, find that Sarasvatī quite easily was adopted by the Buddhists as well as Jains. In Brahmaṇical sects also she was favoured by the Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites equally. Hence she finds place everywhere. So far as temples dedicated to this goddess are concerned, we may mention, Śāradāpīṭha at Kashmir Sarasvatī

---

1. *ASIR*, IX, 1873-74, 74.15, p. 33.
2. Cousens, H., *Chālukyan Architecture*, p. 109-112; Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I., pt. II, pl. CXIII.
3. *JIH*, XLI, III, p. 691.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 691; *Madras Govt. Museum Illustrations of Indian Sculpture*, pl. 21.
5. Goswami, A., *Indian Temple Sculpture*, pl. 112.
6. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, I-II, pl. CXVI, fig. 2, p. 378.
7. *JIH*, XLI, III, p. 693.
8. Sastri, K.A.N., *The Cholas*, pp. 729, 759, pl. XXIII, fig. 54.
9. Goswami, *op. cit.*, pl. 138.
10. Rao, T.A.G. *EHI*, II-I, p. 317-8, pl. XC.
11. Banerjea, J.N. *DHI*, p. 197.

Sadana at Dhār, Vāgeśvarī at Varanasi at Gadag and in a village near Thanjavur.[1] In some parts of India, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are described as the daughters of Śakti, just as Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya are her sons.[2]

Goddess Sarasvatī is also represented in Javanese, Tibetan and Nepalese sculptures. In Tibetan image she is holding *vīṇā* and in Javanese one she is associated with mongoose.[3] Hence goddess Sarasvatī though evolved from a mere river goddess, became an important goddess, and was considered to be the goddess of wisdom and her images were made in India and outside also.

SAPTA MĀTṚIKĀ

The evolution of the concept of Sapta Mātṛikā is interesting in the history of the worship of Mother Goddess in India. Its origin is given in detail in the *Purāṇas*. However, we may trace its origin from the Indus Valley period, where on a seal we find seven figures standing almost in a dancing pose beside a tree (with Goddess and devotee), which may either represent some sort of religious dance or seven-divine figures. In the *Ṛigveda*[4] we get reference to *Sapta Vāṇīḥ*, and *Sapta-Vidhā-Vāṇī* in the *Mahābhārata*,[5] These serve to emphasize the identical character of Vāṇī another Goddess, who can multiply herself at will into seven mothers.[6] Seven flames of Agni correspond to the seven rays of the Sun God.[7] In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*[8] (I.2.4) seven tongues of Agni are mentioned. Dikshit mentions a similar Sapta Mātṛikā tradition in Egypt.[9] Here the cow shaped celestial Goddess, Hat-hor has been multiplied into a group of seven 'Hat hore.'[10] We get reference of Sapta-Sindhavaḥ', which may be equivalent to seven mothers. Grooke noticed in Central Provinces, rivers still believed to be 'tenanted by spirits known as Sat-Bāhinī or Seven sisters.[11] All these go to show the antiquity of the seven divine figures from which the conception of Sapta-Mātṛikā might have taken its present form.

In the rest of Sapta-Mātṛikā conception lies the idea of *Śakti—Śakti* without which a God is lifeless. These *Śaktis* are represented either along with their

---

1. *JIH*, XLI, pt. III, Dec. 1963, p. 688.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 689.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 694.
4. *RV*, III. 7.1.
5. *Mbh*, *Sabhāparva*, XI. 34.
6. Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 194.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 121; *RV*, I, 146. 1.
8. काली कराली च मनोजवा च सुलोहिता या च सुधूम्रवर्णा ।
   स्फुलिङ्गिनी विश्वरुपी च देवी लीला यमाना इतिसप्त जिह्वा ।।
9. Dikshit, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
10. Gray, L.H., *Mythology of all Races*, Vol. XII, 40.
11. Crooka, *Religion and Folk lore of Northern India*, p. 67.

counterparts or independently. And in Indian Sculpture idolisation of *Śakti* as an assistant is very popular. Even in *Tāntric Sādhanā* where independent worship of *Śakti* was recognised as a rule males with their Śaktis were shown. Male and female, therefore, constituted one perfect whole in Indian conception of religion, philosophy and life. According to *Lalitasahasranāmā*[1] it is very difficult to ascertain the sex of Brahmā.

The Sapta Mātṛikā conception, however, takes its final shape in the *Purāṇic* period and from different *Purāṇas* as well as the *Epics* we get enough material. The idea of seven mothers can be found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[2] as well as in the *Matsya Purāṇa.*[3] The perfection of this conception is found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* which is the basis of the Sapta-Mātṛikā images found. The other Purāṇas also preserve the tradition and explain the episode.

The story[4] from the great deeds performed by Viṣṇu in his Varāha and Nṛisiṃha form by killing Hiraṇyākṣa and Hiraṇyakaśipu in his respective incarnations. The next came Andhakāsura to rule over asuras. He had obtained several boons froms Brahmā by piously practising a long series of austerities. Thus becoming powerful he began to cause annoyance to devas. Devas ran, to Kailāśā to complaint to Śiva about their trouble. While Śiva was listening to their complaint the demon-king Andhakāsura appeared at Kailāśa with a view to carry away Pārvatī. This resulted into a great fight between Śiva and his gaṇas on one side and Andhakāsura and his followers on the other. The fierce demon Nīla in the shape of Elephant was killed in the battle by Vīrabhadra who assumed the shape of lion, and the Elephant skin was presented to Śiva, which served his upper garment. Though Śiva assisted by Viṣṇu and other Devas was fighting Andakāsura, he alone could stand against him and all the rest of the devas had to run away. At last Śiva wounded the demon king, blood began to flow from the wound and each drop that touched the ground assumed the shape of another Andhakāsura. There arose now thousands of Andhakāsuras. Śiva, however, could kill the real demon-king and all the secondary ones were killed by Viṣṇu's *Chakrāyudha*. To stop blood falling on the ground Śiva created, out of the flame that was issuiug from his mouth, a *Śakti* called Yogeśvarī. Indra and other devas also sent their śaktis to do the same purpose. They are Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Viṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī, Chāmuṇḍā, the female counterparts of Brahmā, Maheśvara, Kumāra, Viṣṇu, Varāha, Indra and Yema, respectively. They have been given same weapons, same ornaments and the same *Vāhanas* and banners which belonged to their male counterparts.

---

1. पुरु वा स्थिरे स्त्री रुपं व निचिन्तयेत ।
2. *Bhāgwat Purāṇa* I. 12.28f. Here Kṛiṣṇa is said to have seven mothers.
3. *Matsya Purāṇa*, 44.72, *Svasārah Sapta* of *Devavān* wedded to Vasudeva is mentioned.
4. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, Pt. II, p. 379 f.

The account given here simply glorifies Lord Śiva. It also shows the part played by the Śaktis of the Gods. Here, we also notice that these mātṛikās had a male-volent character. They were created to devour blood. In another account given in the *Kūrma Purāṇa*[1] we find how their characters were changed into benevolence. According to it there was a problem as to what should be done with these Mātṛikās after the death of Andhākasura. Śiva commanded Bhairava and the *Mātṛikās* to retire to *Pātāl Loka* which is the abode of *tāmasic* and destructive Viṣṇu Nṛisiṃha. Bhairava being a part of Śiva merged into him leaving the Mātṛikās to play a destructive role without a check. Bhairava then prayed to Viṣṇu Nṛisiṃha to change their destructive nature and it was done. Since then these seven mātṛikās have a benevolent character instead of a malevolent one.

The *Varāha Purāṇa*[2] states that these Mātṛikas are eight in number and includes Yogeśvarī too among them. But all other *Purāṇas* and *Āgamas* mentioned them to be seven in number. This *Purāṇa* appears to be composed when the Mātṛikā conception was already matured and perhaps represented too. Here, we find an attempt to explain this type of mother goddess and the whole story of fight between Śiva and Andhakāsura has been taken to be allegorical. In reality it is a fight between *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* or Spiritual wisdom and Ignorance. Hence these Mātṛikās have been taken to be representing the eight mental[3] qualities which are morally bad Unless these eight evil qualities are completely kept under restraint, it can never succeed in putting down *andhakāra*. In the *Suprabhedagāmā*[4] it is said that these seven Mātṛikās were created by Brahmā for killing Nṛitti.

We may find in these Sapta Mātṛikās some other far reaching meaning too. The Sapta Mātṛikā group of images are generally escorted by Vīrabhadra and Ganeśa, the two distinct deities of Śiva's family. And in these Mātṛikās we may see an attempt made by the Śaivas to arrive at a compromise with the other sects or an attempt for the glorification of Lord Śiva himself. The Great Goddess Durgā, Pārvatī or Umā as known from different sources, do not figure among these Mātṛikās. Śiva is represented by his another *Śakti*, Maheśvari while the *Śaktis* of other Gods find their place in their real form. It may be an attempt, therefore, to subordinate other sects by the Śaivas.

In the fight with Andhakāsura and Mahiṣāsura we may see the fall of two tribal kings or gods. The former of the Andhakas and the latter of the Mahiṣmati. Here we may discuss the Andhakas. They were a branch of the Yādava tribe who possibly lived originally not far from Mathurā but later on migrated to Kathiawar.[5]

---

1. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I., pt. II, p. 381.
2. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, Pt. II, P. 381-82.
3. Yogeśvarī=*Kāma* or desire; Māheśvarī=*Krodha* or anger; Vaiṣṇavī=*Lobha* or covetousness; Brahmānī=made or pride; Kaumārī *Moha* or illusion; Indrānī=Matsarya or fault findings; Yamī or Cāmuṇḍa=*Paisunya i.e.*, tall bearing; Vārāhī=asuya or envy.
4. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, pp. 382-83.
5. Sircar, D.C., *The Puranic list of people*, IHQ, Vol. XXI, 1945. p. 301; *Mbh*, 2.62.8.

Though the Mātṛikās are usually seven in number, we also find some variations in different texts. Varāhamihira is silent about the number and the names of these goddesses and simply says that, ‘Mothers are to be made with cognisances of the gods corresponding to their names.’[1] Utpala while commenting on this passage says that there are other Mātṛigaṇas also.[2] This shows that the number was not limited to seven or eight only. J.N. Banerjea observes that in the subsequent ritual literature of the Hındus, the name of as many as sixteen Mātṛikās with Gaurī in the beginning are mentioned (*Gauryadi-ṣoḍaṣa-Mātṛikā*).’[3]

Śivadūtī also figurss as one of the Mātṛikas. She was sent as a messenger to Asuras, Śumbha and Niśumbha and she originated from Caṇḍīkā’s energy.[4] In this context the emanatary *Śaktis* are seven in the first lot (Nārsiṃhī takes the place of Cāmuṇḍā) and Śivadūtī is the eight one.[5] Cāmuṇḍā was the name given by Devī to Kālī who came out of Ambikā’s forehead.[6]

The Sapta-Mātṛikā images are often carved in relief on a rectangular slab with the figures of Vīrabhadra and Ganeśa on either side.[7] On some stone and bronze sculpture only three mātṛikās (Brahmāṇī, Kaumārī, and Vaiṣṇavī) are represented between Vīrabhadra and Ganeśa.[8] One of the Mātṛikās illustrated by Banerjea is is shown holding a child[9] and one in the Ashutosh Museum of Calcutta University, holding a fish which according to him may perhaps indicate some *Tāntric* trait.[10]

In the depiction of the Mātṛikā images we also find some departure from the prescribed iconographic rules as in the case of Ellora figures.[11] But the Mātṛikās of Belur have been made according to the direction given in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.[12]

Historically speaking, the antiquity of these Mātṛikās goes to a very remote past at least up to Gupta period (so far as their representation is concerned and not the idea). In the Gaṅgādhara stone Inscription of Viśvavarman a feudatory of Kumāra Gupta I dated A.D. 423-24, indicates that his minister built a temple of

---

1. *Brihatsaṁhitā*, Ch. 57, V, 56 as quoted in Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 504.
2. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 504.
3. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 504; In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (Ch. 88, VV 14.20 we get the iconographic features of Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavi, Vārāhī, Nārasiṃhī and Aindrī.
4. *Mārkaṇḍeya, Purāṇa*, Ch. 88, V. 22.
5. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 504.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 504.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 505.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, pl. XLIII, 52, pl. XLII, fig. 34.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 506.
11. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I, pt. II, p. 389. All are single faces. They are distinguished only by their *lanchhanas* or emblems and their weapons.
12. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, P. 505 at Kumbhakonam Kaumārī is like that of Belur. In Puri on the bank of Mārkaṇḍeya Sarovara, Mātrikās have not been found in line.

Divine Mothers.[1] Kālidāsa refers to '*Mātaraḥ*'[2] which may allude to Sapta Mātṛikās. In the Udayagiri Caves (Madhya Pradesh) belonging to the early Gupta period we get the representation of Aṣṭa Śaktis and also the independent Mātṛikā images.[3] Here the Mātṛikās are referred to, no doubt, but their exact number is not given nor does it give their respective names. However, in the early inscriptions of the Chālukya kings, where they are spoken of as the descendants of Hāritī nurtured by the seven Mothers.[4] It is thus clear that as early as A.D. 423-25 the Sapta-Mātṛikās became special objects of worship as well as the tutelary deities of the fundatories of the Guptas (also of the early Kadambas and the Chālukyas).[5] We have seen that Imadpur metal images have only three Mātṛikās. Hence we suppose that in the beginning there were only three Mātṛikās from which the number rose to seven and then to eight and in still later age, as Utapla informs the number rose to sixteen.

The cult of the Mātṛikās reached the zenith of its popularity in the early mediveal times, *i.e.*, the 8th-10th Centuries A.D. and of this time we know quite a number of temples and images of the Gupta or Aṣṭa Mātṛikās.[6] Thereafter they went up into background and Cāmuṇḍā-Mahiṣamardinī alone, as the goddess of war and death continued to be in favour, especially with the Kshatriyas.[7] 'Amongst the lower classes the various forms of the mother-goddess, however, are still popular, *e.g.* near Baroda a famous centre of pilgrimage is the Kālikā *Mātā* temple on Pāvāgadh. Also of the rites prescribed at various auspicious occasions such as marriages, Durgā Pūjā etc., the invocation and worship of the Mātṛikā forms an essential part. But otherwise they were reduced to a secondary position; and in most of the old monuments of Gujarat, especially in the temples erected under the Chālukya-Solaṅkī and the Vāghala dynasty they just form that part of the pantheon of gods and goddesses whose images are arranged in the niches and on the pilasters of the facade, but who rarely were though worthy of even a chapel of their own.[8]'

In the medieval period Sapta Matrikas were represented on the Orissan temples. From Bhubnesvara we get a number of such examples. In Parsuramesvara (A.D. 650) and Vaital (C.A.D. 775) temples a number of Sapta Mātṛikā

---

1. Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, VII, pp. 50-57.
2. *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 38.
3. Patil, D.R., *The Monuments of Udaygiri Hill*, p. 15.
4. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 503.
5. *I.A.*, VI., p. 27.74; VII, p. 162; XIII, p. 1.37.
6. *Bulletin of Baroda Museum*, Vol. VII, pt. I-II, 1949-50, p. 42.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 42. In Bengal she has become the national deity, Kāli Sivaji, received his second sword from Bhavāni. And modern nationalism has discovered her in Bharata Mātā, Mother India.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

group is represented.[1] The Mātṛikā worship received great impetus during the rule of Soma Vanṁśī or Kesari Kings, when probably new conception about Mātṛikās holding babies might have been initiated.[2] The Mātṛikās of the Muktesvara temple holding babies in the arm except Cāmuṇḍā, enables us to class the group as the second type in the Mātṛikā images.[3] And such an iconographic feature probably did not come into vogue before the Bhauma epoch as Panigrahi observes.[4] It is to be noted that in some of the referred groups of the Mātrikās, the accompanying figures of Vīreśvara and Gaṇeśa sometimes occur and are omitted sometimes.

On the rock at Torhaoni Gate[5] in Ajoyagarh fort there is a row of eight goddesses (Ashṭa Śakti) of whom seven are sitting and one standing. Their names are written below them *e.g.* Śrī Chaṇdī, Śrī Cāmuṇḍā, Śrī Kālikā and Jayapura Durgā. From Bheraghat[6] among the *Joginī* figures eight have been identified by Cunnigham as Aṣṭa Śakti or female energies of the gods. In Konch temple[7] some eighteen miles from Gaya the representation of Aṣṭa Śakti is found. From Lakhamandal[8] a black stone slab bearing the seven Mothers in relief with Lakuliśā at one end and Gaṅgāpati at the other, has been found. One Māheśvar[9] is depicted on a fragmentary seal of early period and a relief of Nārasiṃhī[10] from Sutna (Madhya Pradesh). Another sealing of burnt clay[11] is depicted with Brahmāṇī. A very fine and boldly sculptured slab, representing the Aṣṭa Śaktis with their symbols the bull, duck, the lion, the bird, the elephant and the prostrate human figure, has been discovered.[12] In the temple at Chatagi near Bijapur a slab representing the seven Mothers is built in the interior of the Maṇḍapa.[13] Sapta Mātṛikās along with Nine Planets are found on the door jambs of Mahadeo Temple at Kodal in the Damoh disirict dated 12-13th[14] A.D. Many independent images of this group have been found from different parts of the country belonging to the post-Gupta period. The image of the Śakti of Ganeśa in the Indian Museum of Calcutta[15] and the image of Karttikeyānī, the Śakti of Kartikeya,[16] found from Colgong are quite interesting.

---

[1] Panigrahi, K.C., *Archaeological remains at Bhubnesvara*, p. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 135-137.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 136-37.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 136-137.
[5] Chunnigham, *ASIR*, XXI, p. 47.
[6] *Ibid.*, IX p. 63.
[7] Beglar, *ASIR*, VIII, 1872-73.
[8] *ASIAR, 1923-24.*
[9] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 186.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 508.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 186.
[12] *ASIR*, XIII, p. 4.
[13] *ASIAR*, *1929-30*, p. 29.
[14] *ASIAR*, *1927-28*, p. 36.
[15] Indian Museum no. 3919.
[16] Patna Museum Arch no. 103.

Near *Shādol at Antarā* besides Viṣṇu and Kālī images other images represent different forms of Śakti and it appears that the main temple was dedicated to this goddess. The images are interesting from the iconographic point of view because many of the names inscribed on their pedestals are not met with in the common works on iconography. The script in which the labels are written may be of about the 10th Cent. A.D. In addition to the Yogeśvarī Sivaduti, Vārāhi, yanū, and Laksmī we find many that are uncommon *e.g.* Tāraṇī, Sabhavā, Thabhā, (Stambhā for Stambhinī), Kapālinī, Vanaprabhā, Tāmakā, Damakā, Itaralā, Sandhyā, Taralā, Kṛiṣṇā, Bhagavatī, Ramanī, Chapalā, Vāsavā, Sobhanā, Vajrā and Vādarī.

A clear-cut development in the representation of Vārāhī is noticed. In the earlier representation the face is quite natural and human but in later sculpture the bore's head was introduced to justify the term Vārāhī *i.e.* a therioanthropomorphic representation of Vārāhī just like Varāha.[1] Mr. Sivarammurti observes that, 'It is just likely that the earlier vārāhī type is after the Pṛithvīdhara varāha form of Viṣṇu himself with human face as we get in Javanese example like the one preserved in the Museum at Djakarta."[2]

A conception similar to that of Mātṛikās is also noticed among the Jainas. "The conception and imagery of the sixteen Śruta Devatās and the twenty-four Yakshiṇīs of the Tirthaṅkaras, disclose points of identity in respect of names, attributes etc. with those of the Brāhmaṇical Nava-Durgās mentioned in the *Devī Māhātmya* and other *Śākta Purāṇas*."[3]

Hence we have seen that the Sapta Mātṛikā conception of the Śāktas got wide popularity in the mediaeval period. In this period in this type of the representation of the *Śaktis* we may notice an attempt to accommodate many local and tribal goddesses. We have seen that originally the Mātṛikās were only seven in number. It became also eight and even rose to sixteen. The names appearing on the images of the Mātṛikās discovered from Antarā most probably show this attempt.

GAṄGĀ AND YAMUNĀ

In the *Ṛigveda* Gaṅgā does not figure as a goddess. The conception of her divinity is also not very new. In the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* she was conceived as a great Mother Goddess. In Buddha's time too, she was considered to be a goddess. That she was worshipped by the people is evident from the *Jātaka* stories.[4] She emerged as a most popular goddess and till to-day preserves her non-secterian character.[5]

---

1. Sivarammurti, C., *Parallels and Opposites in Indian Iconography*, fig. 45.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
3. *JUPHS*, Vol, XXIII, pt. 1-2, 1950, p. 218.
4. *Jātaka*, Cambridge Translation, II, p. 179.
5. In the *Epics* and *Purāṇas*, she has been exclusively appropriated to the cult of Sivā, but without any prejudice all Hindus worship her.

The goddess Gaṅga is essentially a river goddess and due to her importance, for the north Indian people, commanded reverence from them in due course. Its water is the life blood of northern India, the chief source of navigation, irrigation and fertility. The account of her origin is quite interesting. The *Rāmāyaṇa*[1] and the *Mahābhārata*[2] give almost identical story. According to them she was the eldest daughter of Himavat, and she was brought down from heaven by the austerities of Bhagiratha[3] and when she fell first with great fury on the head of Śiva, who undertook to break her fall.[4] The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta (line 31) gives similar description *i.e.*, Gaṅgā flowing quickly on being liberated from confinement in the thickest of the matted hair of (the god) Paśupati.[5] The names Bhagirathi,[6] Jāhnavī[7] and Mandākinī[8] also occur in the inscription of the Gupta period. Thus Śiva became *Gangādhara*. Gaṅgā is also called Jāhnavī because soon after Śiva released from his coils of hairs Saint Jāhnu swallowed and allowed her to only go out of his ear. She has yet another name Urvaśī, because she sat on the Urū of Bhagiratha.[9]

The source of Gaṅgā, a celestial stream, that washes away the sin, where nymphs of heaven only sported, was in the left toes of Viṣṇu.[10] She is received by Dhruva, the seven *ṛishis* practice exercises of austerity in her waters. 'Falling from on high as she issues from the moon, she alights on the summit of Meru, and thence flows to the four quarters of the earth, for its purification. The Sītā, Alakanandā, Cakshu and Bhadrā are four branches of but one river, divided according to the regions towards which it proceeds. The branch that is known as Alakanandā was borne affectionately by Mahādeva, upon his head, for more than a hundred years, and was the river which raised to heaven the sons of Sāgara, by washing their ashes.'[11] 'The river descended from Śiva's brow in several streams; four according to some, and ten according to others, but the number generally accepted is seven, being *Sapta-Sindhava*, the seven Sindhus or rivers.'[12]

---

[1] *Rāmāyaṇa*, I. 36.44.

[2] *Mahābhārata*, *Vana parva*, 8820.

[3] She is therefore called Bhagirathi also.

[4] The popular notion is that Śiva or Mahādeva receives the Ganges on his head, but this as subsequently explained, is referred by Vaiṣṇavas atleast to the descent of the Alakanandā, or Ganges of India; not to the Celestial Ganges. *Cf.* Wilson, *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, p. 229, f.n. i.

[5] Fleet, *CII*, Vol. III, p. 16.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 241, 248.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 169, 181.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[9] *Mbh*, 7.60. 6; *cf.* Roy, Ramkumar *Mahābhārata Kośa*, p. 149.

[10] Wilson, *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, p. 228, *cf. Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 4.4.15; *Rāmayanā*, 2.50.26; *Kumārasambhava*, VI, 70.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[12] Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, p. 108.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* throw further light on the conception of this goddess. She is most completely personified of all the rivers;[1] she is the mother of Bhīṣma (in human form becoming the wife of Śāntanu).[2] But she is co-wife with Umā of Śiva, and also the 'wife of Ocean'.[3]

We have no doubt a number of account of her origin but still how she began to be worshipped by the people is shrouded in obscurity. It is lost in oblivion, and therefore, various theories have come forward to account for the conception and evolution of the image of Gaṅgā[4] and her divinity.

The Goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā, essentially, belong to the northern Indian plains and much of the prosperity of this land depended upon these two rivers. Geologically, the Indo-Gangetic plains is the gift of river Gaṅgā and her tributaries. Yamunā is no doubt equally important but she draws lesser reverence from the people. In northern India, Gaṅgā has become a symbol for purity and sacredness. Its water is pure, compared to nectar itself. She is popularly known as '*Gaṅgā-Mai*'. A.K. Maitra observes that the conception of this river as Mother—'the giver of health, wealth, progeny and purification from the pollutions of sins—found a congenial atmosphere in the spiritual ideals of the later Āryan settlers, who advocated and inculcated the cult of the Great Mother of Creation—a cult, which, for its sweet simplicity, found ardent followers, even amongst the aborigines, to whom Vedic rites were not only denied, but were evidently unsuited for their primitive culture. Thus came the river-goddess Gaṅgā to secure universal recognisation, which is still as fervent as it was in the days of its introduction ever impressing the poets to sign her praise in hymns, and enrich the lyrics of India'.[5]

It is remarkable to note that Yamunā also gets represented along with Gaṅgā. She is a goddess no doubt but inferior in rank to Gaṅgā. However, in iconography she gets the same status in flanking the sides of the entrance of the temple in Gupta period. Gaṅgā on one side and Yamunā on the other on their respective *vāhanas. The Mārkaṇḍeya Puraṇa*[6] gives an interesting account of her origin. According to it Yamunā is the daughter of Sajñā from Sun, who cursed her that she would give birth to a fickle river, since she was shy and trembling in meeting him.

About the origin of the cult of these goddesses some scholars look for their prototype in foreign lands. While describing the *Naga-Naginī* figures from Ajantā, Grunwedel observes that "this type may certainly be regarded as derived from

---

1. Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 5.
2. *Mbh*, I.98.5.; Bhīṣma is therefore called *Gāṅgeya*.
3. Hopkins—*Epic Mythology*, p. 5.
4. *Rupam*, 6, April 1921, p. 2.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
6. Ch. LXXVII, 1-7.

West Asian Prototypes. It is allied to the creatures with fish tails, that are represented with human bodies; apparently mostly of the female sex—the so called *Matsyanārīs*,—'fish girls'. From this type modern Brāhman art has evolved the representation of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, the goddesses of the 'Ganges and Jamuna.[1] "A.K. Maitra does not accept such a presumption which he thinks is based upon the mere decorative elements in Indian temple architecture taken to be undoubted representations of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. On the other hand, he points out that such a presumption is not supported by any test and except Viṣṇu, no *Brāhmaṇ* deity was ever conceived as a fish or combination of human beings and fish.[2] Rather he suggests that possibly 'Gaṅgā-Yamunā' images might have been the outcome of a conception, which embraced a wider field and included in it the image of Varuṇa, the lord of ocean.[3] There is no doubt that in the Gupta period the two river-goddesses are represented in association with Varuṇa. Varuṇa is an important God in the *Ṛigveda*,[4] similar to Rudra, Indra, Pūṣan, Mitra, etc. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottra* (III. Ch. 52), the ocean god Varuṇa should be sculptured as seated in a chariot borne by seven swans of foam like whiteness, bedecked with jewels and accompanied by Gaṅgā and Yamunā. A sudden emergence of such a cult representation somewhat astonishing.

In the Udyagiri[5] cave Veruṇadeva is shown with folded hands at the same time Gaṅgā and Yamunā descending on their respective *vāhanas* viz. *makara* and tortoise. On the door jambs also their figures serve the purpose of decoration. It is, therefore, quite interesting to enquire into the cult of these rivers. No doubt goddess Gaṅgī never assumed independent status like Sarasvatī, though she is associated with Lord Siva. Grunwedel's suggestion deserves examination. And her *Nāga* origin cannot be an absurdity. She is a devata in *Jātakas*, and is also represented so in the sculptural reliefs of Bhārhut. The *vāhana*, *makara* appears no doubt but the lower end of the body is more like a fish or a snake. This marks a slight change in the conception. Her association with *Nagas* is evident from sculptures also. In a 10th Century representation of Gaṅgā from Iśvarīpur (Jessore), She is attended by *Nāga* and *Nāginī*, the *Nāga* holding an umbrella whereas *Nāginī* is holding a pitcher.[6] In the case of Yamunā also the *Nāga* association can be proved though her *Vāhana* is tortoise and she is not associated with *Nāgas* in iconographical representation. However, in popular legends Yamunā was the abode of Kāliya *Nāga* a constant menance to the people of Mathurā and Vṛindāvana.[7]

---

1. Grunwedel, *The Buddhist Art in India*, p. 46.
2. *Rupam*, no. 6, April 1921, p. 3.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *RV*, I, 26, Varuṇa is conceived to be the greatest among the gods.
5. Udayagiri caves of Madhya Pradesh near Vidiśā belonging to the Gupta period.
6. Majumdar, R.C., *History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, p. 461.
7. *Harivaṁsa*, *Viṣṇuparva*, XI, 44f; XII, pp. 3f.

The simple geographical reason that these two rivers fall in the ocean connects these goddess with the ocean god. Gaṅgā-Yamunā, therefore, are associated with Varuṇa. But this God who is prominent in the *Ṛigveda*, could not evolve into a popular cult and this special worship, as the lord of waters, came to be practically forgotten, and now from the Gupta period 'they continued to occupy a niche on the outer face of temple—and his companion—images (Gaṅgā and Yamunā) could be given a more dignified position as guardians at the entrances to temples.'[1]

Such a degradation of a mighty Vedic God is quite interesting to enquire into. We know that Hindu temple architecture took its shape first of all in the post Kuṣāṇa period and early Gupta period. Prior to this we had Buddhist rock-cut temples and *Stupas*. Temple as an abode of God was no new conception in India. The emergence of Hindu temples required decoration, designs and motifs, since we find the *stūpas* and the *Caityas* all decorated with flower patterns and demi-gods like *Yakṣa* and *Yakṣinī*. The idea of decorating the entrance with Varuṇa as *dikpāla* and Gaṅgā—Yamunā as guardians must have been taken from *Yakṣas* and *Yaksinīs* serving the same purpose in the *stūpa* gateways and elsewhere. It is also natural because *Yakṣas* and *Yakṣinīs* are associated with water. They are guardians of lakes. The *Yakṣiṇīs* hang on both sides of the Sāñchī Gate ways. Thus in the fitness of the *dvara-devata* tradition Gaṅgā and Yamunā were adopted to serve as the guardians of the entrance of the temples. The oldest available images of these goddesses belong to this form, and some critics have taken such representations as proof of the process of admission of a non-*vedic* goddess to the orthodox pantheon.[2]

The female figure holding a jar in its raised hand appearing on the coin of Nāga King Vīrasena, has been taken to represent the emblem of Gaṅgā by some scholars.[3] The emblem further passed on to Vakāṭakas and Pravarasena I issued a number of coins bearing this symbol.[1] The Guptas adopted it from the Vakāṭakas and it appeared on the 'Tiger type' of the coins of Samudragupta.[5] And soon this symbol began to make its appearance in the temples of the Guptas which can be seen at Bhumara and at Deograph.[6]

In the early Gupta age, therefore, images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā appear as guardian deities. The cave-temples of Udayagiri hill (Madhya Pradesh) display fine examples of such figures. One of the flanking scene of the Varāha cave

---

1. *Rupam*, No. 6, April, 1921, p. 4.
2. *Ibid*., p. 4; Cunningham (*ASIR*, *IX*. *42*) takes their presence at the temple door as one of the seven characteristics of the temple-style of the Gupta period.
3. Saletore, R.N., *Life in Gupta Age*, p. 540; Rapson, *JRAS*, 1900, p. 102; fig. 15.
4. *Ibid*., p. 540; Smith, *Catalogue of coins in the Indian Museum*, No. XXII, fig. 15.
5. *Ibid*., p. 541. Here the figure of Gaṅgā can be seen standing to the left on a *makara* (the elephant headed fish) ; plate VII. 1.
6. *ASIR*, X, p. 104, Temple no. 5.

represents the birth of the twin rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā, their confluence at Prayāga and the final merging into the ocean.[1] V.S. Agrawāla observes that, 'It is only in Gupta art as in literature of this period that the two rivers make their appearance, and we can not but infer that Kālidāsa making a pointed reference to them as attendents of the temple deity is referring to them as attendants of contemporary art.'[2] But the place of these guardian images was not yet fixed and some where it was on the top and at the other on the bottom.[3] So early Gupta age was 'an age of transition, during which the proper place for these guardian images does not appear to have been finally settled'.[4] A.K. Maitra points out that the deification of Indian river did not stop with the Ganges and the representation of Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī on their respective *vāhanas*, *makara*, tortoise and lotus can be noticed in the sculptured shrine of the sacred rivers attached to the Kailāśa temple, Ellora, and Havell thinks that in the seven panels on the architrave above are seven figures probably representing the seven streams fertilising the land of Āryāvarta.[5]

In the course of further development Gaṅgā-image being supported by the sacred texts attained independent status as a goddess, whereas Yamunā could not. Gaṅgā had the advantage of being connected with Lord Śiva and a seated figure of Gaṅgā on the matted hair of Śiva is also found.[6] In the representation of Gaṅgā at Bhubaneswar we find an ascetic with matted hair seated on the left corner while Gaṅga is depicted with two attendants and Yamunā with one. Panigrahi thinks that perhaps the ascetic is Lord Śiva.[7] Even the holiness of Yamunā depended upon Gaṅgā since the former had forfeited her such a claim, by living as wife of her own brother according to a popular legend.[8]

When and where independent worship of Gaṅgā originated and developed is an interesting problem. In the early period it is definite that for independent worship she could not get favour either in literature or in Art. It is only an outcome of the late medieval art, 'chiefly in the lower Gangetic plain.'[9] Her worship was given a *Tāntric* form although the legend on which it was based was purāṇic.[10]

1. Agrawala, V.S., *Gupta Art*, p. 7 fig. 7, *Raghu*, XIII, 58.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 8. मूर्ते च गंगा यमुने तदानी सचामरे देवियसेविषाताम् *Kumārasaṁbhāva*, VII. 42.
3. Vincent Smith published two such examples in his book '*History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*', p. 100.
4. *Rupam*, No. 6, April 1921, p. 5.
5. *Ibid* , p. 5,
6. Rao, T.A.G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol, II, Part I, p. 5, Gaṅgā and Yamunā had been mentioned by Kālidāsa as flywhisk bearing attendants of Siva; *Kumārasambhava*, VII, 4.2.
7. Panigrahi, K.C., *Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneswari*, p. 71, Fig. 37.
8. *ERE*, Vol. VII, p. 514.
9. *Rupam*, No. 6, April 1921, p. 6.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

We do not get any ritual in the *Tantrasāra* and in it Gaṅgā appears only as *dvāra-devatā*. The *Purascharyārnava* (Part III, p. 88) traces it to the *Merutantram* which lays down the ritual in detail. In the *Purāṇas* we have noticed that Gaṅgā is associated with Viṣṇu as well as Śiva both. Similarly the *mantrā*[1] calls Gaṅgā, Śivā as well as Nārāyaṇī. We come across a number of *dhyānas* of the later period. We do not get any special *Yantra*-diagram-invented for her worship, rather one already in vogue for the worship of Sarasvatī was recommended to be utilised.[2] No doubt in the *dhyānam* stress is laid upon the 'beauty of form and spirit and upon the recognition of the divinity of Gaṅgā by the Devas.'[3] But we do not find here the quality of Gaṅgā as purifier of sins which only gets mention in the *praṇāma*[4] *mantra*. In the *mantra* she was called *Sukhadā* (the bestower of happiness here) and *Mokṣadā* (of salvation hereafter) and also the best source of salvation (of *Paramā gatiḥ*). In Gaṅgā people found a real goddess that resided in no imaginary heaven, to be envoked with mystic *mantras*, and realized only in the abstract.[5] She was on the other hand a 'Divine Grace, flowing in a liquid form by the very door of the inhabitants,—washing away all impurities, scattering a broad cast fertility, and offering a natural highway of commerce.'[6]

With such a conception of the goddess there is a development in her image also. And in the late medieval period, a crown or a coronet on the head and a jewel pot placed on the palm of the hand, were added to show her exalted status.[7] A white umbrella was also added later on.[8] The Gaṅgā and Yamunā representation from Bhubneswar entirely differ from that of the later period. The mounts are present but broken and Gaṅgā stands in water indicated by wavy lines, female attendants by her side; one holds a parasol over her head and the other a flywhisk.[9]

Such development of the cult of Gaṅgā occured in the *Tantric* region as remarked by Maitra.[10] In the Pāla-Sena period the best specimens of this goddess were made. As already mentioned the images of Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī were installed in many principal places of pilgrimage.[11] And naturally we do not find image of Gaṅgā, confined to a particular region.

---

1. *Oṁ Mantra, Śivāyai Nārāyaṇyai, daśārayai gaṅgai svahā*' as quoted in *Rupam*, no. 6, April 1921, p. 6.
2. *Purascharyārnava*, pt. III, p. 1158.
3. *Rupam*, No. 6, April, 1921, p. 6.
4. '*Sadyāh=Pātaka=Samhantri' Sadyo dukhavinaśinī Sukhadā Mokṣadā Gaṅgā Gāṅgaiva paramāgatib*' quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 6.
5. *Rupam*, No. 6. April 1921, p. 6.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 6. This popularity perhaps induced *Tantras*, to accept Gaṅgā as a goddess by formulating its ritual.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
9. Panigrahi, K.C., *Archaeological Remains at Bhubneshwar*, p. 71, fig. 37.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

In the Pallava art keeping close to the *Purāṇic* tradition the descent of Gaṅgā is depicted on the outer face of the rock cut temples at Mamallapuram (7th Cent. A.D.). It is one of the largest and most beautiful and dramatic relief of all time. From Gujrat also Gaṅgā figures are discovered. One of the figures have been found at Kadvar on the door frame and other on the old (Sūrya) temple at Than. At Than Gaṅgā has four hands and can be contrasted with Gupta figures at Tigowa and Kharod in the Madhya Pradesh. It is also not certain whether the Than figure holds any *kumbha*.[1]

A.K. Maitra also traces the evolution of her *vāhana makara* in most convincing manner. The actual form of *makara* is not known, which has given rise to all speculations. It is 'purely mythical ones, not found in nature' by one writer while other takes it to have evolved out of two animals—'Rhinoceros and the Tapir'.[2] *Makara* occurs as one of the zodaic signs. In Indian literature we get a clue to its origin.[3] It is an animal which kills by teeth and is associated with sea.[4] *Amarakośa*[5] describes it as an aquatic animal, while Suśruta clearly calls it a sea fish.[6] These references show clearly that *makara* was not altogether an imaginary animal. A.K. Mitra[7] refers to many texts and early forms of this animal from Mahābodhi, Bhārhut, Sāñchī, and also from Mathurā, Aihole, Kanherī, Ajantā and Boro Budur. These figures almost look like a fish but with a quadruped form. Vogel points out about the Mathurā *makara* that it looks 'more like a fish than crocodile'.[8] But from 6th Cent. A.D. a significant change in this respect appears to have been introduced, when Gaṅgā images were made for special worship. *Makara* as a *vahana* no doubt was associated with Gaṅga right from the early Gupta age but it had a decorative character. But 'the introduction of the Gaṅgā-image for special worship, unconnected with any decorative necessity, appears to have first subordinated this decorative tendency to a consistency of form more suitable to a *Vāhana*.'[9]

A more perfect specimen of late medieval Bangalore Art (12th Cent. A.D. of Sena Style) represents the goddess Gaṅgā in a posture of graceful solemnity and benign repose.[10] The figure is mutilated, and standing on a strongly built *makara* of a quadruped type.[11] This figure is the tallest and is bigger than 'one visible on

---

1. Sankalia, H.D., *The Archaeology of Gujarat*, p. 165.
2. Gānguli, M., *Orissa and her Remains*, p. 208.
3. *Rupam.*, no. 6, April 1921, p. 8.
4. Dalvana's Commentary on *Suśruta*.
5. I.10.20.
6. *Sūtrasthānam*, Chapter 46.
7. For detailed information see A.K. Maitra's article entitled, 'The River-Goddess Gaṅgā' in *Rupam*, no. 6, April 1921, pages 2-10.
8. Ibid., p. 8. The early types definitely indicate aquatic origin.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
10. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, p, 110, fig. 17.
11. Varendra Research Society at Rajshahi, S.No. H(C) 2 (plate), p. 354.

the door of the Bhogamaṇḍapa, removed from Koṇāraka and attached to the shrine of Jagannātha at Purī.[1]

Hence, we find that Gaṅgā worship had a glorious tradition. Its history is quite interesting. It started as a river goddess, became a guardian deity, and in the later mediaeval period commanded special worship. The Āryan experience along the river, which became the centres of religious life, might have helped in the deification of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. But again she has been brought down to old status. We may, however, presume that she never lost her popularity of a great benefactress, due to the usefulness of its water for the northern Indian people. She is, no doubt, still considered to be a goddess and even '*Gaṅga jala*, is considered to be nectar itself. But no image worship goes on in India to-day except in Bengal where 'the worship of Gaṅgā with Clay images still prevails'.[2]

NĀGA-NĀGINĪ

In India, serpents have been revered from time immemorial. Even to-day we observe a festival called *Nāga-Pañchamī* when we feed serpents and do not kill them. In Indian folk-lore serpents generally, appear in human shape. Some of our principal gods have been decorated with *nāgas*. All these go in support of the divine character of serpents recognised by people in India since very long.

Not only in India but in other countries also serpents are revered and associated with a particular god or goddess. In China[3] serpents like other animals, occasionally, have temples dedicated to them, this cult being apparently connected with the belief in metamorphosis but on the whole they are feared. In Japan[4] serpent is frequently worshipped as a mysterious being, often the embodiment of a spirit or god. Similarly Crete and Egypt this divinity of serpents[5] is not unknown. The Cretan Snake Goddess has already been referred to. But in Babylonia[6] there is little trace of worship of the serpent. In Greece they are regarded as guardians of graves, sanctuaries, and dwellings and were kept there or represented in symbol.[7] The antiquity of the serpent worship can be traced even back to the palaeolithic period as serpent finds its place in the palaeolithic drawings.[8]

In India the cult got its perfection in the early Gupta period. No doubt, we do get representations of *Nāgas* and *Nāgas* in the early Buddhist art at Sāñchī,

---

[1] *Rupam*, no. 6, April 1921, p. 10.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[3] *ERE*, Vol. I, p. 402.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 402.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 402.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 403.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 403.
[8] Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 36; *ERE*, II, p. 40. In Australia, Africa, Polynesia, Malenesia, Dayak, everywhere snake worship is done.

Bhārhut, Bodhgayā and Amarāvatī. Besides a number of terracotta figures have also been discovered with a serpent-hoods to symbolise the divinity of serpents, belonging to the Mauryan and Post-Mauryan period. But we are not sure about their representing a particular cult. They very probably appear to be demi-gods and might have some fertility significance attached to them. The serpents are believed to possess 'gift of immortality was definite tenet in Europe among the alchemists and practitioners of occult arts.'[1] The serpents are also associated with women as they are associated with the moon.[2] In India wicked women are compared with *Nāginī*– a female serpent. In Indian mythology *Nāginis* also occupy an important place. Throughout the length and breadth of India, it was a popular cult. It is really significant to note that serpents are associated with *Śakti*. S.K. Dikshit informs that 'Śakti devī who has a hundred *pīthas* spread all over India, has very often, as at Chitrari in the Chambi State, a serpent in her hand. The cult of Earth Goddess, like Ellamma (recognised as fertility divinity) or her impersonation Mātangī, is associated with snake symbols.'[3] He, further, observes that that, 'serpent worship prevails in most countries, where beliefs connected with the fertility cult exist or where Mother-Goddess is worshipped.'[4] Vogel informs us that the Cobra is worshipped up to the present day by women, desirous of offspring throughout the whole of western and southern India,[5] rather in the whole of northern India, even to the present day.[6] It shows, therefore, serpents have the power to increase fertility. And in India the serpent cult was conceived accordingly.

How serpents came to be regarded to possess such a power is difficult to say. The psychology behind such a conception may be taken to be the fear inspired by these venomous creatures into human heart. Vogel refers to an Indian proverb: 'Even a great man is not worshipped, as long as he has not caused some calamity; men worship the *Nāgas*, but not *Garuḍa*, the slayer of *Nāgas*.'[7]

As regards the origin and significance of *Nāga*-worship there is a diversity of opinion. According to Fergusson[8] *Nāgas* were not originally serpents but serpent worshippers an aboriginal race of Turanian stock inhabiting northern India who were conquered by war-like Āryans. He is of opinion that neither Āryans nor Dravidians were serpent-worshippers and any such reference found in the *Vedas* or earlier writings of the Āryans must either be interpolations of later date or connected to the superstitions of the subject races.[9] Prof H. Oldenburg takes them to be demonical being whereas Hendrik Kern essentially water-spirit but Dr. C.P. Oldham disagrees with them and considers that originally *Nāgas* were not demons.[1]

---

[1] Briffault, R., *The Mothers*, Vol. II, p. 641.

[2] In southern Italy it is a current saying that serpents make love to all women *cf.* Briffault, R., *The Mothers*, II, p. 664.

[3] Dikshit, S.K., *The Mothers Goddess*, p. 39.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[5] Vogel, *Indian Serpent Lore*, p. 270.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[8] Fergusson James, *Tree and Serpent worship*, as referred to Vogal's *Indian Serpent Lore*, p. 2.

[9] *Ibid.*

Dr C.P. Oldham[2] makes certain conclusions about these *Nāgas*: (1) The *Nāgas* were a sun-worshipping sanskrit-speaking people, whose totem was the *Nāga*; or hooded serpent; (2) in process of time they became known as *Nāga* due to their emblem; (3) it formed a portion of the great solar race and can be traced back to the earliest period of Indian history; (4) at first they occupied the north and west of India, but afterwards spread towards the east and south; (5) some of these tribes, and amongst them the *Nāgas*, retaining their ancient customs, and not readily admitting the ascendency of the Brāhmaṇas, were stigmatised by the more orthodox as *Asuras*; (6) Amongst portion of the descendants of this people, *Nāga*-worship īn its primitive form still survives. And that it consists in the adoration, as *Devas* or demigods, of ancient chieftains of the tribe; (7) the connection between the serpents and the Buddhist and Jaina religions can be thus explained; and (8) All Asiatic countries at all events, in which so called serpent-worship prevailed, it was the *Nāga* or hooded serpent only which was held sacred.

These conclusions of Oldham are important and significant no doubt but to discuss them here in detail is quite difficult and at the same time it is beyond the scope of the subject in hand. *Nāgas*, just opposite to gods in nature, had a large family. We got information about them in the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas*. It is more probable that the worship of serpents originated on account of the fear from the possible harming quality of these venomous creatures, whose single bite was enough to kill a man. Still, the theory of the tribal origin of the cult cannot be ignored.

However, we have seen that in almost every age *Nāga* worship was prevalent in India. In the *Epics (Mahābhārata ādiparva)* we get reference to serpent *Yajña* performed by Janmejaya. Their origin is taken to be divine in the *Epics*.[3] Śeṣa Nāga the Chief of the *Nāgas*, who dwells in the neither region, sustains the entire load of the earth upon his hood.[4] In iconographic representation Viṣṇu has been shown reclining on a serpent known as Ananta and this type is known as "Anantaśayī Viṣṇu." Not only Viṣṇu but Śiva has also been associated with snake which served as ornaments adorning his body. In this connection the birth of this race is quite interesting. Both *Garuḍas* and *Nāgas* were sons of Kaśyapa, by the daughter of Dakṣa.[5] There is born enmity between *Garuḍa* and serpent. To explain this enmity, they might be taken to be totems of different tribes.[6] Viṣṇu was thus a favourite of the tribe having *Garuḍa* as their emblem and Śiva was

---

1. Fergusson, James, *op. cit.*
2. *JRAS*, 1891-92.
3. *Mahābharata*, J., 66.70; *Rāmāyaṇa*, III, 14.28.
4. *Mahābhārata*, *Droṇa Parva*, Canto, 94, Verse 48.
5. *Mbh.*, *Adi Parva*, *Aṣṭika*, p. XXXVI, 114, XXX, I, 106.
6. *JRAS*, 1891, p. 369.

popular with the tribe having *Nāga* as their emblem. Śiva is definitely given a serpent on his head for decoration, which is hooded. This is a variation of the serpent-hood itself, whereas serpent serves the couch of Viṣṇu on which he reclines. Not only this but in his incarnations he kills serpents—the killing of Kāliya *Nāga* residing in Yamunā by Kṛiṣṇa.[1] Whatever the meaning of this enmity may be, Nagas represented the Great Mother Goddess. S.K. Dikshit points out that, "It is nevertheless worth remembering that Rasā or Surasā is always mentioned in the Purāṇas as a form of the Great Mother; her progeny is called *Nāgas*. She is after all the Queen of all serpents. Rasā-tala, therefore, reminds us of Ila-Vṛita, and both these countries, named after the Earth Goddess, might possibly denote some region on the surface of the earth; and they may not be far removed from each other, since we are informed that 'Rasā-Tala was close to the Sumeru mountain.'[2] Thus there is no doubt about the divine origin of the *Nāgas* in the *Epics*.[3]

The wide worship of the *Nāgas* is also unquestionable. The Lichhavis were serpent worshippers and the tutellary deity of their Chief City, Vaiśālī was a *Naga*.[4] The Lichhavis of Nepal and Lahoul of Tibet were *Nāga* worshippers.[5] In Kumaon and Garhwāl there are still over eighty temples in which the *Nāga* is worshipped and in the Punjab Himalayas the number is unknown.[6] From excavations at Rājgīr (Maniyār Maṭha) many *Nāga* and *Nāginī* images have been discovered.[7] The city of Rājgṛiha has been described by Lord Kṛiṣṇa on his way to the Kingdom of Magadha as the residence of 'Maṇi Nāga.'[8] Bihar, therefore, appears to be the seat of *Nāga* worship. Even today *Nāga* worship is a widespread cult in Eastern India, especially, in Bengal where the cult of the Snake goddess Manasā[9] is very popular. A seventh Century A.D. image of Snake Goddess was also discovered from Nālandā.[10]

A *Nāgī* statute 7′ 6″ in height (including tenon at the base was discovered from Sāñchī made of Nagourī stone and was executed in the 4th or 5th Century A.D. and must once have stood free on a spot where it could be seen from all sides.[11] However, these Snake Goddesses never occupied any temple as a presiding deity during Gupta age and they perhaps all through remained to be conceived as divine.

[1] In the trampling down of Kāliya instead of killing. Kosambi, D.D., sees, a parallel of the action of Mahiṣāsura—mardini. *Cf. Myth and Reality*, p. 26.

[2] Dikshit, S.K., *The Mother Goddess*, p. 159; *Cf.*. Dey Nandolal, *Rasātala the Underworld*, Cal: 1924 p. 10; Moulton, J.H., *Early Religious Poetry of Persia*, 1911, p. 131.

[3] We propose to deal with the family of the *Nāgas* while dealing with Goddess Manasā.

[4] *Mahavaṁśa Tikā* (Turnour), Intro. XXXVII.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. XXXVII.

[6] *JRAS*, 1891, p. 388.

[7] *ASIAR*, *1935-36*, pp. 53-54; Plate, VIII-5.

[8] *Mbh. Sabhaparva*, Ch. 21, Verse 9-10.

[9] Manasa to be dealt separately while dealing with the folk goddesses.

[10] *JBROS*, XXVIII, 1942, p. 156. Also *cf. ASIAR*, 1930-34, Plate LXVIII.

[11] Marshall, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, Vol. I, p. 59.

In Orissa the *Nāgas* are rare in the earlier temples at Bhubneshvara. They are conspicuous by their absence in *Parasuramesvara* temple and they occur on the door jambs in Siriśvara temple holding foliated vases with both the hands.[1] Two Nagas can be found in the two small temples standing in the *Muktesavara* compound and of two others now kept in the Jagamohana of the Vaitāl temple.[2] 'The peculiarity' noted about them, by Dr. Panigrahi, 'is that they have all been represented as human figures with canopies of serpent hoods over their heads, not as half-serpents and half-human beings. They also hold foliated vases with both hands. In their later representation which are to be noticed for the first time in the Mukstesvara, they appear as half-serpent and half human beings with canopies of servent hoods over their heads and with such objects as garlands, vases, conch shells and flywhisks held in one hand or in both.

In the *Purāṇas*, Durgā is styled as Nāgeśvarī, Gonasabharana or Bhujaṅga *veṣṭita-śarīrā*[4]. Dikshit[5] informs that under these names she is worshipped according to Tod,[6] by the Rajputs, who are also devotees of the phallic cult of Ekalingaji and adore mythical *Nāga* Kings like Tajaji, Gugā, Pīpā, etc. Puskara lake near Ajmer is provided with a 'remarkable' *Nāga* legend.[7] Dikshit further observes that there is sufficient material to prove that serpent-worship was greatly in vogue in Kathiawar and Gujarat.[8] Similarly it can be shown that the snake worship was prevalent in Bihar.[9] In Kashmir also serpent worship was deeply rooted. According to *Rājataraṅginī* serpent-hooded canopy of Nīla who when Kaśyapa raised Kashmir above the waters, ruled over the *Nāgas.*[10]

There is no doubt that *Nāga* worship had a wide prevalence in India and they occupied a very prominent place in the Indian folk lore. Mostly they are taken to be 'Water-spirits which dwell in springs, lakes and pools and which have the power over rain, hail and snow.'[11] The foreign accounts of Fa-hien and Yuan-Chwang also furnish information about *Nāga* lore.[12] Fa-hien also takes *Nāgas* to be dwel-

---

1. 32 Panigrahi, K.C., *Archaeological Remains at Bhubneśvara*, p. 116, Fig. 24.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 116, fig. 8.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
4. *Agni-Purāna*. 145-10; 134.1; 135.1; 144.32; as referred to in Dikshit, *The Moth er Goddess*, p. 39.
5. Dikshit, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
6. Tod, *Annals and Antiqui ties of Rajasthan*, I, p. 455-588, etc.
7. *ERE*, X, 566 b.
8. Dikshit, *op. cit*, p. 40. Also *cf.* Vogel *Indian serpent lore*, p. 267, *IA*, 1.6.1; IV, 83f, 193f, G.W. Watson, *Places of Snake worship in Kathiawar.*
9. *JBRS*, XLVI, pts, I-IV, p. 129-34.
10. *Rajatoraṅginī* (Calcutta edition), 1.4.
11. Vogal, *Indian Serpent Lore*, p. 247.
12. *Ibid.*

ing in rivers, lakes, and ponds and controlling atmospheric changes.[1] According to the popular belief misers are born as snakes and they guard their treasure. Treasures have often been taken to be guarded by snakes in the folk-tales.[2]

---

[1] Vogal, *op. cit.*,

[2] An interesting story is given by Tibetan historian Taranatha about the election of the King of Gauḍa, Gopāla who killed the *Nāga* woman used to kill all the kings. *Cf.* IHQ, VIII p. 530-31; XVI pp. 219.

CHAPTER 7

MOTHER GODDESS IN HINDU AND BUDDHIST TANTRAS

By about 5th Century A.D. Mother Goddess cult reached its maturity and in the form of Śakti Devī her conception is preserved in the *Purāṇic* literature. In the idea that *Śakti i.e.*, feminine is superior to masculine that the Mother Goddess conception culminated. *Tantras* are a step forward. No doubt, similar ideas are at the root of it. Here also the Great Goddess rules supreme. She is the ultimate source and unto her disappears everthing. She is the creator preserver and destroyer *i.e.* all the three aspects of creation are combined in her.

The *Tantras* and the *tantric* form of worship have been greatly criticised for many reasons. According to Chintaharan Chakravarty,[1] in the most popular sense the *tantra*, in the present days, 'is to denote a class of literature dealing with mystical and magical worship of various deities.' Not only this, rather some scholars take it to denote 'the mystical worship of female deities (Śakti) alone with which are associated various revolting and apparently depraved and immoral rites.'[2] It would be arreneous to accept such a meaning. To know the exact meaning of the *Tantras* we will have to enquire into the contents of the *Tāntric* literature. Bhattacharya observes that, 'The Hindus will not call any work as Tantra which does not include the following subjects among many others, for instance, the stories of the creation and the destruction of the world, the mystic charms, a description of the abode of gods and of holy place, the duties of men in the four stages of life and of the position of the Brāhamins, a description of the abode of ghosts and other nocturnal beings of the mystic figures, the origin of magicians and celestial trees, of the position of the stars and discourses on old stories, meaning of technical terms, description of Vows and observances, distinctions between purity and impurity, enumeration of the characteristics of male and female, account of duties of the king the customs of the age and of the rules of law and of spiritual subjects.[3] The Tantras, therefore, cover almost all the aspects of philosophy. Thus to brand it to be associated with immoral acts is unjustified. It requires a sober study, without any prejudice.

---

[1] Chakravarty, Chintaharan, *The Tantras—Studies on their Religion and Literature*, p. 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[3] Bhattacharya, *Sādhanamālā*, II, p. XIX-XX.

Sri K. Guru Dutt, regarding the meaning of *Tantra*, observes that, "The word Tantra is derived from the root *tan*—meaning to draw out, to spread. The significance is clearly brought out in words like *tanu* : what is spun out like a thread, a strand; and *tanu* : the body, in which the spirit has spread out or revealed itself. In Hindu religious usage, Tantra stands for ritual in general, whether of the external variety or dealing with methods of introspection. Ritual has been called the art of religion, and most historical religions have been associated with some form or other of ritual, although the relative importance attached to it has varied greatly. The cloth of religion has been made up of the strands of Tantra, whatever may be the philosophical design into which the strands have been woven. To vary the image, ritualism has been, as it were, the body-*tanu*-in which the spirit of religion has most commonly manifeated. As ordinarily there is no smoke without fire, it would be in order to say that there is no ritual without religion, and whatever there is ritual, there is Tantra."[1]

Tāntricism, in India, therefore, has a hoary antiquity. It has been traced back to pre-historic times.[2] It is noticed in *Devī Sūkta* (*Ṛigveda*) by some scholars.[3] Even the *Brāhmaṇas* are taken as the *Tantras* of the *Veda*[4] though the real form of it was yet to take final shape in the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods. Tāntric form of worship was in vogue when *Śrīmad Bhāgvat* was written, since the gopīs of the Braj worshipped *Yogamāyā* (goddess Śakti) for obtaining Śrī Rṛiṣṇa as their husband, and references to tāntricism can be found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Liṅga* and many other *Purāṇas*.[5]

In the opinion of a few scholars, the *Tāntric* religion came from China whereas others say that it was taken from the Mahāyāna Buddhism. On the contrary, some say that the Mahāyāna Buddhism adopted the doctrine of the Indian *Tantras*; and Arthur Avalon agrees that Tantras are not the off-shoots of the Buddhist Mahāyāna cult. According to L.de la Valle Poussion, 'Buddhist Tāntrism is practically Buddhist Hinduism, or Śaivism in Buddhist garb.[6] Hence, essentially Hindu and Buddhist Tantras are similar in nature both Buddhist and Hindu Tantras hold that ultimate non-dual reality possesses two aspects : negative (*nivṛitti*) and positive

---

1. Guru Dutt, K., *Hindu Culture*, p. 94. In the opinion of the Author, Brahmanas can also be called 'Tantras of the Vedas', because the meaning of the root bṛh is similar to that of *tan* *i.e.* to expand or to spread out.
2. Bruce Foote is said to have met with objects supposed to be phalli among the Neolithic remains from Deccan *cf.* Foote Collection of Indian *Pre-historic and proto-historic Andiquities*, Madras, 1916, pp. 20.61.139.
3. Bose, D.N., *Tantras their Philosophy and Occult Secrets*, p. 3.
4. Guru Dutt, K., *op. cit.*, p. 95; Root birth=to expand or grow and tan=to spread out, to mean the same—Kulluka Bhaṭṭa asserts that tantras are a part and parcel of the Srutī—'The Veda & Tantra do indeed constitute the warp and woof of Hindu thought and usage (p. 98.).
5. Bose, D.N. *op. cit.*, p. 3.
6. *ERE*, XII, p. 193.

(*pravṛitti*)—static and the dynamic. In Hinduism it is expressed in the conceptions of Śiva and Śakti whereas in Buddhism by *Prajñā* and Upāya (or *Śūnyatā* and *Karunā*).[1]

Motherhood of God is emphasised by the *Tantras*, which may 'appear to be sacrilegious, because we have been taught to look upon God as male being', but 'Tantras have preferred to represent Brahma, as the Eternal Mother of Universe.'[2] Supreme Deity, therefore, is held by the *Tantras* as the Eternal Mother of the Universe.[3] Similar to the philosophy of *Tantra* is the philosophy of *Sāṅkhya*. Both accept *Prakṛiti*, the creative energy of God to be the First cause from which everything has proceeded, the only difference lies in the fact that the *Sāṅkhya* takes it only to be the first creative energy whereas in *Tāntric* system *Prakṛiti* is more popularly the name of the Goddess.[4]

The Hindu *Tantrā* believes that after casting off the cover of *Māyā*, the great *Śakti* or *Prakṛiti* divided herself into two *viz* Śiva and Śakti and from their union Brahmā was the first issue, who then created from his own energy a maiden (Great Vidyā or Sāvitrī) and married her for creation.[5] In this way Viṣṇu and Sadāśiva were created and given their Śaktis; hence, *Prakṛiti* or *Mahā Śakti* as the *Tantras* designate Her, is the creative power of the Almighty.[6]

Tantras, thus glorify Śakti. In the *Purāṇas* (especially *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa—Devī Māhātmya* Section) we come across the conception of Śakti and legends connected to it but philosophical explanation is found only in the *Tantric* literature. The Supreme position of Devī (*Śakti* of Śiva) given in the *Purāṇa*, is further elucidated in this literature. Arthur Avalon observes that, "Power or Śakti is the root of all existence. It is from Śakti that Universes are evolved, it is by Sakti that they are sustained, and it is into Śakti that they are finally resolved. It is the same as Parabrahman, is Existence (*Sat*), Consciousness (*Chit*) and Bliss (*Ānanda*). By *Śakti* is denoted exactly these three aspects in the one without a second. *Chit* is the power, and the two other aspects go along with it, for without consciousness there would be neither existence nor happiness. *Śakti* then, is essentially absolute *Satchitananda*,[7] and 'within, so to say, the womb of Śakti, is *Māyā* or *Prakṛiti*, the metrix of the universe which during cosmic inaction or Mahāpralaya is potential

---

1. Das Gupta, S.B., *An introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, p. 2-3. Tantric Buddhism holds that the principle of Prajna and Upaya are objectified in the female and male. And the ultimate goal of both the schools is the perfect state of union. Moreover, in Buddhist Tantras we find fragments of metaphysical thought, which are all taken from the leading schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism as influenced by Panisadic monism (pp. 2-3).
2. Bose, D.N., *op. cit.*, p. 59.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
7. Avalon, Arthur, *Principles of Tantra*, p. 584.

and latent, even as fire is latent within wood. *Māyā* or *Prākṛiti* is not a non-reality nor a state of equilibrium of certain things; nor is it a something-nothing, something little (*yatkinchit*) an idea (*bhāva*).'[1] The *Śaktamālā Candrika* goes to declare that Brahmā, Śiva, Viṣṇu and Vāsava all are *Śaktis*, which is also at the root of many other Devas, hence it is the greatest of all.[2]

The Buddhist *Tantra* is the development of the *Yogācāra* and was inspired by the *Śūnyavāda* of the *Mādhyamlkas*. *Varāyāna*, is therefore, an advancement of the *Yogābāra* thought. *Vajrayāna* literally means the adamantine path or vehicle but its technical meaning is '*Śūnya* vehicle' where *Śūnya* is used in a special sense to represent *Vajra*. It is said : '*Śūnyatā* is designated as *Vajra* because it is firm and sound, and cannot be changed, cannot be pierced, cannot be penetrated, cannot be burnt and cannot be destroyed.[3] Vajrāyāna introduced a new element in the element of *Mahāsukha* (Eternal Bliss) to their conception of liberation.[4] For the first time the worship of *Prajñā* or *Śakti* in Buddhism was introduced and a host of other things including a large number of gods and goddesses, their *Sādhanās* for the purpose of visualisation, *Mantras*, *Tantras*, *Yantras*, *Mudrās*, *Maṇḍalas*, mystic realization and Psychic exercises of the most subtle character. It included in its purview all varieties of attractive tenets, notorious, dogmas, theories, rites and practices, and incorporated all that was best in Buddhism and probably in Hinduism also and owing to this circumstance *Vajrayāna* attained great fame and popularity. Here the 'gods have no real existence, the images have no real existence, and therefore, we may be positive in saying that a true Vajrayānist never worshipped any image of god.' It is *Śūnya* which takes shapes of god and goddess in *Vajrayāna*. It is Heruka, when a male; and Nairātmā, when a Goddess.[5]

Vajrayāna regards Ādi Buddha as the highest deity and in the *Yabyum*[6] form he is shown in embrace with his Śakti (known as Prajñapāramitā). In *Vajrayāna Śūnyatā* and *Karuṇā* are given importance and in the *Tāntric* Buddhism *Śūnyatā* is termed *Prajñā* and *Karuṇā Upāya*. *Prajñā* stands for Śūnyatā because it represents perfect knowledge whereas *Karuṇā* acts in mind like a dynamic force. '*Prajñā* is passive by nature, the religious inspiration is derived from the active emotion of compassion, which serves like the means or the expedience (*Upāya*) for

---

1. Avalon Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 584.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 495.
3. Bhattacharya, B., *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. XVII.
4. *Ibid.*, p. XI; 'It is from *Mahasukha* that *Vajrāyāna* originated and *Vajrayanā* is the system rich in iconographical ideas.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 164—The different asanas have a different meaning *e.g.*, *Vajraparyaṅka*—meditation *Ardhapayaṅka* or *Lalitasāna*—Serenity, Alidha—heroism, Pratyalidha—destruction, Loathsomeness. Dancing attitude in *Ardhaparyaṅka* wrath horror.
6. Many Buddhist Gods of Nepal and Tibet have been shown holding their Saktis on knee as Siva holds Umā. *Cf.* Das Gupta, S.B., *op. cit.*, p. 130.

the realisation of the highest goal.'[1] The whole conception of *Vajrayāna* lies in interpreting the male and female relationship. The physical pleasure has been given sublimity with the mataphysical touch. *Prajñā* is even described as female organ and *Upāya* as the male organ.[2] (a clear-cut similarity with the *Liṅga* and *Yoni* conception of Hindus).

We have, therefore, seen that both Hindu and Buddhist *Tantras* are similar in their conception and the same idea in put forward by them in different words.

Tāntrism is generally associated with *Chakrapūjā* and *Pañcatattva.* Many interpretations are prevalent among people and this has made people suspicious about this system. But an analysis of these two elements, would make it clear that they have enough of justification for themselves. To trace their origin is, of course very difficult. In the *Chakra Pūjā* equal number of men and women belonging to different caste or castes and may be near relatives—husband, wife, mother, sister, brother meet in secret, usually in night and sit in circle. The Goddess may be represented by an image or *Yantra*. Then with the repetition of *mantras*, rituals is performed in which partaking of the five *tattavas* (elements) is done, *viz.* wine (*Madya*), meat (*Māṅsa*), fish (*Matsya*), parched grain (*Mudrā*)[3] and sexual intercourse (*Maithuna*).[4] The *Yantra* used in this worship has also a symbolic significance. It is an instrument designed 'to curb the psychic forces by concentrating them on a pattern'.[5] Regarding *Śrī Yantra*, Zimmer suggests, that among the nine triangles five are pointing downwards symbolising *Yoni* and rest upward symbolising *Liṅgam* (upward triangles are called *Vāhnī* and downwards ones Śakti), thus 'the *Vāhinī* triangles denote the male essence of the god and the Śakti—triangles the female essence of his consort.'[6] Barth observes : 'The use of animal food and spirituous liquor, indulged into excess, is the rule in these strange ceremonies, in which Śakti is worshipped in the person of a naked woman, and the proceedings terminate with the carnal copulation of the initiated, each couple—representing Bhairava and Bhairavī (Śiva and Devī) and becoming thus for the moment identified with them. This is the *Śricakra* 'the holy Circle or the *Purāṇbhishekha*, complete conscription, the essential act, or rather fore-taste of salvation, the highest rite of this delirious mysticism.[7] It is needless to go into the details of the mystic rituals.

---

1. Das Gupta, S.B., *op, cit.* p. 101; *Yosit tavat bhavet prajñā Upāyati purusah Smritaḥ* (*Hevajra Tantra*).
2. *Yoni—Svabhavatah prajñā Upāyo bhava—Lakṣaman* (*Śri guhya-Samajā—tantra*).
3. *Mudrā* also means 'Mystic gestures'.
4. *Maithuna* (sexual intercourse as rendered) appears something extra-ordinary in this system and looks quite immoral act. Relaxation of sex-rules may not be the motto and something else (probably a philosophical discussion) might have been meant.
5. Zimmar, *Myths and Symbols of Indian Art and Civilization*, p. 141.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 146-47.
7. Barth, A., *The Religions of India*, p. 204-05.

Let us now come to the large number of goddesses belonging to Hinduism and Buddhism both, and their *Tāntric* conception. The forms of *Śakti* have been classified on the *Mahāvidyas* or *Vidyās* and the *Nityas.*[1] These are Kālī, Kāmākhyā, Vāsalī, Nīla or Nīlesarasvatī or Tārā, Bheruṇḍa, Mahādurgā, Tvaritā, Chhinnamastā, Vāgvadinī, Annapurṇā, Pratyengirā Bālā, Mātaṅgī, Śailavasinī, Ṣoḍaṣī, Bhubneśvarī Bhairavā, Dhūmāvatī, Vagālā, Kamalā, Mahiṣamardinī, Dhanadā, Gaurī Tripuṭā, Tripurā, Mahāmāya, Śūlinī, Cāmuṇḍā, Kātyāyanī.[2] The deities like Kālī, Tārā, Durgā, are very popular in Eastern India.[3] Besides Vaglāmukhī or Pītā, Ucchiṣṭacaṇḍālinī, Karṇapiśācī, Sarikā, of Kashmir, Kubjikā of Nepal, Indrakṣī and Raṇkīnī are also some of the deities, worth mentioning though we have very little information about them. The *Vajrayānī* goddesses[4] are : Vajravilāsinī, Vajra-Khecārī, Vajrāsanī, Vajra rasānī, Vajra tvasīnī, Vajrasparśinī, Vajra Cetanī, Vajra Vivāsinī, Vajra Vikāsinī, Kurkukullā Caṇḍālī (also known as Dombī, Yoginī, Sahaja—Sundarī, Nairātmā or Nairāmanī) Ekajaṭā, Jāṅgulī, Parṇa Śavarī Mārīcī, Soḍalakṣmī, Uṣniśavijaya, Chhinnamastā (it is included among both Hindu and Buddhist deities) and Tārā in detail here as because we have a number of good works[5] dealing with them. However, we shall take up here some of the important and interesting ones.

The morning goddess of the Vedic pantheon, Uṣas, is held to have found place in the *Vajrayāna* pantheon in the form of Mārīcī. She is the goddess of Dawn in Tibet and has features like sun, though her chariot is drawn by seven pigs (and not horses). Her charioteer is just like Aruna (of Sun) a goddess without legs or Rāhū, only a head without a body. Her worship is done independently and she is never shown in Yabyum with her consort Vairocana. In China she is called 'Queen of the Heaven' and Mother of the Dipper in Tibet, Goddess of Dawn in Japan. As Getty observes : 'Mārīcī is evidently the goddess of Aurora of the Āryans.'[6] To us it appears that it was not Uṣas who inspired the conception of Mārīcī but sun himself. In the process of attaching highest importance to females and conceiving Gods also as feminine the Sun was also grabed as Mārīcī by the *Vajrayānists.* Her independent image is also in favour of such a contention. Ordinarily Mārīcī is depicted with one face and two arms, but when she holds the bough of an *aśoka*[7] tree in the left hand, she is called Aśoka. Kāntā when she carries the needle and the string in her two hands, she is called Āray-Mārīcī.[8]

---

1. Chakravarty, Chantaharan, The *tantras—Studies on their Religion and literature*, p. 85.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
4. For details see B. Bhattacharya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. Getty, A., *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, p. 117.
7. *Sādhanamālā*, p. 306; Bhattacharya. *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. 209.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

There are so many types of this goddess. She is depicted with a number of arms (varrying) in her different forms. Almost all the images of this goddess discovered so far belong to the Aṣṭabhujāpita variety. The Indian Museum piece[1] (Pāla period) depicts the goddess three faced and eight armed, standing in *alīḍha* attitude, with her right leg somewhat bent and the left one thrown behind quite straight, over a double petalled lotus. The Lucknow Museum (From Sarnath)[2] piece is also three faced and has eight arms like the Indian Museum piece. She is an emanation from Vairocana.

Chinnamastā is another interesting figure conceived both by Hindus and Buddhists. She is among one of the Hindu's ten Mahāvidyās. According to *Dhyāna* the goddess Chinnamastā may be imagined to have a very awe—inspiring external appearance. 'She holds her own severed head in her left hand and from her severed neck issued forth stream of blood falling into the mouth of the severed head. She is nude and of fierce appearance with legs arranged in *Pratyālīḍha* attitude. She wears a garland of heads.[3] The Buddhist description is also the same with little variation. It is very difficult to explain this deity. This may be symbolic of putting an end to one's own ego. Ekjaṭā, Jāṅgulī and Parṇaśavarī all appear to be folk goddesses.

Among the *Tantric* goddesses two appear to have commanded wide popularity and are even to the present day worshipped inside and outside India—Kālī of the Hindus and Tārā of the Buddhists. We, therefore, propose to discuss them in short here. From the study of the literature and also from the iconographical representation a number of forms of Tārā come to our knowledge. In the Tibetan paintings we get some thirty specific forms, which is something extraordinary. Waddell observes : "The genesis of the name 'Tārā' for this great Buddhist Mātṛi, one of whose titles is 'Mother of Buddha', it seems to me probably suggested by the Hindu myth of Buddha or that planet Mercury, whose mother was Tārā; and, either by wilful or accidental confusion, the idea got transferred to Buddha, who also not long after-wards received a place in the Hindu pantheon. And her relatively milder nature better adapted her as a female energy, or Sakti to the Buddhas and Boddhisattvas, than her fierce counterpart in the Hindu *Tāntrism*—the dread Durgā—who is given a much lower position in Indian Buddhism. In the *Mūla Tantra* the world Tārā is used synonymously with 'wife' or 'queen' like Devi amongst the Hindus."[4] Though the cult of Tara had definitely an obscure origin, yet it can be said that the conception of her cult has little of borrowing from

---

1. Bhattacharya, B.T., *op. cit.*, p. 12, fig. 152.
2. Ghosh, A., *A Guide to Nalanda*, pp. 20,30; Bhattacharya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. 212, fig. 154.
3. Bhattacharya, B. (ed). *Sadhnamala* II, P. CXIV.
4. *JRAS.*, 1894, p.63; The cult of Tārā might be taken to have a foreign origin. From *Sādhanamālā* it appears that it came from Bhota or Tibet *cf.* Chakraverty, C., *op. cit.*, p. 46.

Hinduism. The introduction of her cult into Buddhism almost began to ting Indian Buddhism.[1] Yuan Chwang, in the first half of the seventh Century A.D. incidentally refers to her image being worshipped at a few Buddhist shrines in India,[2] but 'her worship must soon thereafter have developed rapidly, for her inscribed images, dating from the eight to the twelvth centuries A.D. are numerous at old Buddhist sites throughout India including Magadha—the birth-place of Buddhism.[3]

Tārā has some similarity with the Hindu Goddess Lakṣmī, because both are water-born.[4] Tārā appears to be most appropriate a mother goddess full of compassion for the suffering humanity. She is unlike Hindu Mother goddess born to exterminate evil forces. And the story of her birth is true representation of her nature as she is born from the tear shed by Avalokiteśvara.[5] The tear from the left eye formed a lake, on which like a lightning flash appeared floating on a lotus flower the goddess Tārā whom Avalokita then commissioned to soothe human suffering. Waddell remarks that " 'Tārā's appearance is quite Indian, and entirely different from that of the female Avalokita, or 'Kwanyin' of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhists—the indigenous Chinese 'Queen of Heaven.' "

Tārā has different forms-pacific and ferocious both, red, yellow and blue coloured are ferocious whereas white and green ones are pacific forms. Mostly these Tārās are represented always seated, but when accompanying Avalokiteśvara or any other important god she is represented standing.[6]

Tārā, therefore, appears to be a great Buddhist goddess[7] who commanded veneration in India and outside also. She was more popular in Tibet, though in the Pala Sena period we have a number of her representation from Eastern India.

Hindu *Tāntric* deity Kālī is more mysterious in conception. She too has a number of forms, but mostly ferocious. The birth of Tārā was to soothe suffering humanity, whereas Kālī was born to destroy evil. Basically their characters differ. But Kālī too has many forms *e.g.* Siddha Kāli, Guhya Kālī, Bhadra Kālī, Śamasānā Kālī, Rakṣā Kālī or Mahā Kālī and Dakṣina Kālikā. Daksina Kālikā is the most popular form, which is quite fearful in appearance having four hands, gruesome face, black colour, garland of human heads, corpses constitute her ear ornaments, girdle of human hands, having in her hands freshly severed head, sword, and blood-smeared body and blood also trickling through the corners of her mouth. She is naked (*Digambarī*), teeth protruding, breasts large and high, seated on the

---

1. *JRAS*, 1894, p. 63.
2. Beal. *Si-Yu ki*. II, p. 103-174.
3. *JRAS*, 1894, p. 63.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 64-65; 'Tārā a great object of veneration in the Hindu Tantras, appears to have been a direct borrowal from Buddhism, *cf.* Banerjea., J.N., *DHI*, p. 560, n. 1.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
6. Getty, A., *The Gods in Northern Buddhism*, p. 106
7. Chakravarty, C., *op. cit.* p. 90.

bosom of Mahādeva lying as dead, and surrounded on all sides by howling and fearful she-jackals. In her nature she is therefore opposite to Tārā. She is born from the forehead of Devī who became black with anger as demons (Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa) came to attach her.[1] Tara is born from compassion whereas Kāli is born from anger.

Kālī[2] is worshipped in Bengal on the day of *divālī* with pomp and grandeur, B.C. Majumdar has pointed out that Vākpatirāja (8th Century) in his *Gauḍavaho* refers to Koli women and the Sabaras as the worshippers of Kālī.[3] When and how the cult of Kālī became popular in Bengal is an interesting problem. Many scholars have advocated her non-Āryan origin, which may not be improbability though S.N. Bose on the other hand takes Śiva-Kālī cult of a purely Āryan origin, because no trace of Tantric rites is found among the wild savages of India.[4] He explains the symbolic meaning of her iconographical features: 'Her darkness can be symbol of Infinite, sky is normally dark. Lord Kṛiṣṇa was also black: Her dishevelled hair a symbolic clouds floating in the sky. Her necklace of skulla, gridle of palms, Ghost around may indicate the terrible aspect of death-destruction and dissolution, occurring every moment around us: Her right hand raised assuring protection, left bestows blessings: the Mahākāla under feet is not Śiva but the image of time: Time has no existence without God. Time and space are annihilated in Brahma and this is what has been expressed in the *Ādya Kālī Stotra* of the *Mahanirvāṇa Tāntra*.'[5] R.P. Chanda remarks that' in the Tāntric image of Kālī is pictured forth Indian or rather the Bengali conception of the all-destroying Time.[6]

The representations of the Buddhist goddess Aparājitā is quite interesting. She has been shown as trampling upon Gaṇeśa.[7] (The epithet *Gaṇapatisama Krānta* being peculiar to her). It may point out the familiar theme of religious Clashes, but other details of the representation is quite unintelligible. The goddess is shown attended by gods like Brahmā, Indra and others. One may see in this the humiliation of all these gods. Still it is surprising as to why only Gaṇeśa is trampled upon and not the other gods, though Brahmā is a member of the Hindu Triad. However, it may be said that the conception of Aparājitā was formed in the locality predominated by the *Gāṇapatyas*, which necessitated defeat of the Lord of *Gāṇapatays*-Gaṇeśa. It is interesting to note that this goddess is not assigned to

---

1. *Mārkandeya Purāṇa—Devi Mahātmya, Section VII*, 5ff.
2. Chakravarty C., *op. cit.*, p. 92; She is regarded as guardian deity against Cholera even in some villages in south India. *Cf.* Whitehead, H., *The Village Gods of South India*, Cal. 1916, p. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 46, also *JRAS.*, 1906, pp. 355 ff.
4. Bose D.N., *op. cit.*, p. 70-71.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 92-93.
6. *Indo Aryan Races*. p. 138.
7. Bhattacharya, B.T., *op. cit.* p. 190; Sinha, B.P., *Bhārtiya Kalā Ko Bihār kī Dena*, pp. 139-40, fig. 125.

any Dhyānī Buddha, and no iconographical feature make her emanating from any of the five Dhyani Buddhas.

Jāṅgulī is widely worshipped amongst the Buddhists as a goddess who cures Snake-bites and prevents it and according to Saṅgitī in the *Śāhanamālā* she is as old as Buddha himself. The secret of Jāṅgulī and the mantras for her worship are said to have been imported to Ānanda by Lord Buddha.[1] Jāṅgulī appears to have been originally a folk-goddess who was taken into the fold of Buddhist pantheon like *Yakṣas* and *Yakṣīs* of the earlier period.

Nairātmā is another powerful goddess of this pantheon. It is similar to the form of Vajravārāhī with Kartṛi and Kapilā and when it lies on the breast it is Vajravārāhī and when it lies on the back it is Nairātmā.[2] She has a terrible appearance, canine teeth, garland of head and three eyes rolling in anger. She stands on a corpse like Hindu godaess Kālī.

Uṣniśa Vijaya is the most popular deity of the pantheon in Nepal where in every temple her image is installed. However, her most artistic specimen belongs to the Indian Museum, Calcutta.[3]

In the *Tantras* we find Sixty-four *Yoginīs* mentioned. The *Āgamic* texts enumerate some sixty-four *Yoginīs*.[4] We get their representations from Bheraghat near Jabbalpur. At Khajuraho also there is a temple called Sixty-four Yoginī temple belonging to the pre Candella period.

Tāntricism which almost began to be popular in about 6th Century A.D. slowly and slowly became popular. Most of the popular goddesses of Hinduism or Buddhism came to be associated with Tāntric form of worship J.N. Banerjea observes that, 'In the Mediaeval period Tantricism associated with Brāhmaṇical Hinduism as well as of Buddhism attained full development in India, the cult being especially predominant in Eastern India. Śakti worship was also popular among many Hindus of extreme South-West of India, and tradition says that Śankarācārya, the greatest exponent of Advaitavāda, was at heart a worshipper of the goddess.'[5]

Tāntricism has nothing new but forceful exposition of conception of supreme Śakti in the root of everything and a form of worship with certain specific rituals, moral conception and secrecy. In true perspective Tantric form of worship is motivated by purely magical bearing. It stresses on *Sādhana*. 'It is by virtue of this direct knowledge of the Brahman in the form of Śiva and Śakti that Tāntric Sādhakas ever conquer the world. Strengthened by it, the Sādhaka does not design even to cast a look at other Śāstras.'[6]

---

1. Bhattacharya, B.T., *op. cit.*, p. 80, pl. XXVIId, XXVIIIa.
2. Bhattacharya, B.T., *op. cit.*, p. 90, pl. XXXa; Indian Museum no. 3941.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
4. Banerja, *DHI*, p. 465-66.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 495.
6. Avalon, Arther, *Principles of Tantra*, p. 209.

CHAPTER 8

FOLK GODDESSES

In the study of the cult of the Mother Goddess we cannot ignore, folk goddesses, their history and nature. Many of the folk-elements must have been assimilated in growing orthodox cults but many could retain their individuality, though we come across various attempts in the vast extent of religious literature towards the identification of the folk elements with that of the orthodox cult. And in such an attempt the folk goddesses have been identified with the Great Mother Goddess—Śaktidevī. Throughout India there are thousands of local goddesses, whose study here is not practically possible. We will, therefore, confine ourselves to the study of few important folk goddesses the Hindu and the Buddhist, who still occupy an important place in the religious belief of the people *e.g.* Hāritī, Manasā, Ṣaṣṭhī, Jyesṭhā.

HĀRITĪ

Hāritī[1] is essentially, a Buddhist folk goddess. The characteristic iconographical feature of this goddess is the babe in her lap, which makes her a mother goddess. She might have something to do with Child welfare. We have an interesting account given in the *Mahābhārata*.[2] Jarāsandha was the king of Magadha ruling at Rājagṛiha and was one of the enemies of Śrīkṛiṣṇa. Jarāsandha was originally born in two halves and it was due to Ogress Jarā that two discarded halves were brought back to life on being joined together. Hence the name of Jarāsaṅdha, literally meaning 'United by Jarā'. Jarā had the power to assume many shapes and was a Rākṣasī (Kāmarūpinī). She was worshipped not only in the royal house-hold but also venerated by the people in general making her *gṛiha devī*. If she was painted on the walls of the house in youthful appearance

---

1. D.H. Gordon holds that Hāritī was the important Mother Goddess of the Gāndhāra, with whom philosophy of Buddhism had to share its sanctuaries and its worship, no lesser one than the great Mother Goddess herself, patron of Pushkalavati as Athene of Athena. (Antiquity, XI, 1937, p. 71). Gordon believes in her foreign origin and thinks that real deities immediately behind the inadequate Hariti and Kuvera are Anaitis and Mithra and that they alone can fulfil the conditions of style and period. (*Ibid.*, p. 72-73) which came into North-West India at the time of Antiochue the Great Syria, about 210-200 B.C. (*Ibid.*, p. 77).
2. *Mbh.*, II, 18, 1-6.

surrounded by her children, the house-holder was to be blessed with plenty. Similar tradition (having affinity with Jarā) about an Ogress is preserved in the *Vīnayapiṭaka* of the Sarvastivāda School, the *Mahāvastu*[1] and the *Samyukta ratna Sūṭra* of the *Chinese Sūtrapitaka*.[2] According to this story a Yakṣiṇī named Hu-annasi meaning 'Joy'[3] was the tutelary deity of Magadha. On account of an unholy wish expressed by her in one of her previous births, she indulged in the practice of robbing the people of Rājagṛiha of their children and feeding herself and her 500 sons on them. The local people gave her the name of Hāritī (literally 'one who steals'). Lord Buddha is said to have taught her a lesson for stealing by hiding her youngest son[4] and later on ordained that in all monasteries and in the house of all right-minded people, her figure and the figures of her children are to be carved or painted and eatables offered to them. Banerjee observes that, 'There is little doubt about the ideological affinity between Hāritī and Jarā and the popularity of the cult of the former both in and outside India is fully vouchsafed by literary and archaeological data.'[5] And the two stories go to prove that some goddess was very popular in Magadha, particularly around Rājagṛiha. It was, however, adopted by the Buddhist. The popularity of Buddhist depended to some extent on its tendency to accommodate folk sentiments.

In India she was widely worshipped. Her images along with her husband Pañcikā[6] have been found. The evolution of Pañcikā must have been taken from the Yakṣas, who are essentially guardians of the treasures and the purse of gold in his hand prove that he got himself transformed from a 'jealous gaolar into a generous dispenser of riches.'[7] Similar transformation we have noticed in the case of Hāritī who forms an Ogress became a matron.[8] Foucher further observes that originally she was nothing more than a terrible infantile epidemic who lived on children of men for her food but in religious art (which presupposes her conversion

1. Senart (Ed.) *Mahavastu*, Vol. I, p. 253. *Chhatravastu Avadāna*. Here she is Kunala by name and is associated with Vaisāli. It is only in the *Vinayapiṭaka* and the *Chinese Sūtra piṭaka* that we know about Hariti.
2. Banerjea, J.N. ,*DHI* p. 381.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
4. Pihgala or Pilengka.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 381, Yun Chuang places the place of conversion near Taxila (Watters, On *Yuan Chuang*, Vol. I, p. 216) Yuan Chuang calls her proctectress of and giver of children whereas fishing makes her giver of wealth too. Takakusu, *A Record of Buddhist Religion in India*, p. 37—As referred to |in N.K. Bhattasali's book '*Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in Dacca Museum*, p. 66.
6. Foucher observes : "In the man it has long been proposed to recognise Kuvera, the 'King of the spirits' but the texts merely designate him as their 'general' by his name Pañcika & is in virtue of this title that he is nearly always leaning upon a lance." *Cf*. The *Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, p. 141.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 141, Foucher calls her Buddhist Madonna.

by Buddha), her sole function is to accord to the vows of the faithful a numerous progeny.[1] Hāritī has, therefore, both Hindu and Buddhist ancestry and was worshipped by both.

Getty informs us that the Hindu goddess Hāritī was worshipped in northern India by bereaved parents and in Nepal she was believed to prevent small-pox.[2] She is represented both in the form of Saint and Ogress in Japan, and is worshipped under the names of Koyasu Kwan-non as saint and Kishi-no-jin as Ogress.[3] Waddell thinks, on the basis of Sculptures of Hāritī with Kuvera that she is none other than a form of Vasundharā, goddess of Abundance, and consort of Kuvera, god of wealth.[4]

The above discussion has clearly shown that Hāritī with whatever origin she might be connected, is essentially a Mother Goddess and a true Mother Goddess looking to the prevention of disease, need of progeny and wealth. She appears to be an effective goddess for her cult was adopted by the Hindus as well as the Buddhists. The legends connected with her as preserved in the literature definitely connect her with Rajagriha but she was given an important place in the Gandhara Art. To us it appears that it was because the artist found familiarity of the myth as it was similar with one connected with the western legends. In the Gāndhāra art we find a number of her representations which made Yuan Chung to associate the very conversion of this goddess with Taxilā.

The Chinese traveller refers to the Hariti Stupa said to have been erected by Aśoka and which was located by Foucher at Sare-Makhedheri in Pesawar, and narrates how her worship migrated outside India to Eastern China (through Chinese Turkistan and Kashmir), Korea and Japan, though in transformgd character.[5] This shows that the antiquity of the worship of this goddess can be traced back to the Mauryan period, which is very doubtful, whether Aśoka could be associated with the erection of Stūpas over such cannibal goddess is itself a problem. However, we can safely believe that in Kuṣāṇa period her iconographical representation had started.

The usual representation of the Goddess[6] shows her sitting on a full blown lotus with a babe in her lap and other children around her. B.K. Dutta discusses an image of Hāritī from Nalgorā which is not in sitting posture but stands on a lotus, decorated with simple ornaments like a Santālī maiden and though provided

---

1. *Foucher, op. cit.*, p. 141, Foucher finds a similarity of this myth with that of one connected with Lamin who was transformed into Lucina.
2. Getty. A., *The Gods of the Northern Buddhism*, p. 75.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 75; also "*Evolution of the Buddhist Cult, its gods, images and art*'—Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review, Jan. 1912.
5. *IHQ.*, 1938, p. 101 ff. *Some Folk Goddesses of Ancient and Mediaeval India*—J.N. Banerjea.
6. *JISOA*, X, 1942, p. 207, The goddess of Buddhist Pantheon.

with a loin cloth, she has intentionally been shown round in nude which makes her 'an embodiment of profusion and wealth.[1]' But in this the artist never forgot her connibalistic affiliation. In iconography this aspect is shown either associating her figure with skull-cup or a fish or a pomegranate.[2] The Nalgorā image has been associated with pomegranate.[3] N.K. Bhattasali on the other hand indentifies an image, in the Dacca Museum with Hāritī, which is seated on a lotus seat, with four arms (the upper right hand holds a fish and the upper left hand has a drinking bowl and with the two normal hands she holds a baby in her lap.[4]) Bhattasali observes that, 'The present image with two extra hands holding a fish and skull-cup appear to be a Mahāyāna redaction of the two, two-armed goddess, reminiscent of the cannibal nature of the goddess.'[5]

The cult of Hāritī, therefore, had wide prevalence and popularity. We learn from the accounts of the 7th Century Chinese traveller, how her cult was acclimatised in ancient Gāndhāra. This is also proved by the discovery of a number of representations[6] mostlv belonging to the Kuṣāṇa period. Here Buddhist counterpart had a long history of her own both in India and outside India. In India she is sometimes depicted along with her children while at other time accompanied by her consort Kuvera, the *Yakṣarāja* (Some times described as Pañcikā, the general of the Yakṣa King) as well as her playing children.

MANASĀ

We have just discussed an ogress (Hāritī) who became a goddess with a benevolent character. Now let us discuss the cult of Manasā who was originally a serpent. Her worship is very popular in Bengal, which takes place on the fifth lunar day of *Srāvaṇa* (*Nāga-pañchamī*). Manasā is identified with the sister of Vāsukī (Jaratkāru) who was married to a Brāhmiṇ sage named Jaratkāru and to whom Aṣṭika was born ultimately saved the entire race of the *Nāgas* from its mass destruction by Janmejaya.[7] No doubt *Nāga Pūja* has a remote origin but the

---

1. *JISOA*, X, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
2. "Gautama is believed to have cured her of cannibalism by giving her a diet of pomegranate, the red fruit being supposed to resemble human flesh'—Getty informs (The God in Northern Buddhism, p. 75.)
3. *JISOA*, X, 1942, p. 208; This symbol is still used in Japan but never adopted in China (Getty, *op, cit.*, p. 75.)
4. Bhattasali, N.K., *Iconography of the Buddhist and the Brahmanical sculptures in Dacca Museum*, p. 63 ; pl. XXV opposite page 64.
5. *Ibid.*, 67.
6. Agrawala, V.S., *A Catalogue of the Brahmanical images in Mathura Art*, pp. 88-91.
7. Vogel, *Indian Serpent Lore*, p. 278; In the *Ādiparva of the Mahābhārata* the serpent sacrifice is detailed. Mr. N. K. Bhattasali has discussed this Goddess in detail in his book, '*Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures in Decca Museum*, pp. 212-227; plates LXXII. LXXXIII.

origin and development of a particular cult is shrouded in obscurity. The only fact which we can say with certainty is its popularity in Bengal. It appears that her cult had a Bengal origin or it was transplanted into Bengal by some migrating clan. However, in the present state of knowledge it is difficult to say anything with certainty.

Prof Kshitimohana Sena advocates its southern origin.[1] According to Prof Sena the southern snake goddess Mañchammā or Mother Mañchā, who is still worshipped among the Telugu and Canarese speaking people of southern India, obtained in Bengal the Semi-Sanskritised name of Manasā. N.K. Bhattasali agrees and further informs that 'the name does not occur in the earlier grammers and lexicographies, and the mediaeval grammarians and lexicographers had difficulty in explaining this ungrammatical name.'[2] It is no wonder that the cult of Mañasā came to Bengal with many families coming from south India and which almost dominated the history of Bengal and Bihar for a considerable long period—the Senas of Bengal[3] and Karnats of Mithilā may be mentioned in this connection. The iconographical representation[4] of Manasā is also very late, which goes to support this contention.

N.K. Bhattasali[5] tries to show that Manasā, who was imported to Bengal from south India quickly out did Jāngulī a Buddhist snake goddess (of the Mahayāna school) in popularity. Manasā, no doubt, had similar characteristics, as she was the healer of the effects of poison.[6] In the dhyāna[7] quoted by Mr. Bhattasali, Manasā is lotusborn and also daughter of Śaṅkara with a pleasant face and serpent hoods. It is quite likely that with the decline of Buddhism in India, Manasā having similar characteristics replaced Jāṅgulī and soon acquired popularity. And there remains little doubt about a late import of the cult of the Goddess Manasā.

However, it is interesting to note the popular worship of the goddess does not takes place in her anthropomorphic form, rather on the occasion of *Nāgapañchamī*' 'a milky hedge plant (*Euphorbia jingularum*) is planted on a raised mound of earth in the courtyard of the house and in the form of this plant the goddess Manasā is worshipped.'[8] In the popular legend she is said to have told that she lived in the cactus tree (*Euphorbium pentandra*).[9] This form of worship shows on the other hand

---

1. Pravasi, 1929, B.S. p. 384-95.
2. Bhattasali, N.K., *op. cit.*, p. 221.
3. Bhattasali observes : 'They very likely favoured the worship of Snake goddess Mañchā & their rise probably gave an impetus to her popularity, *cf. Ibid.*, p. 224.
4. There is an uncertainty about the so called Mathurā image of Manasā Devī, which is inscribed in the inscription Yakşhi Lāyāva—*ASIAR 1922-23*, p. 165; Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 98.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 221-23; Janguli is also called Śavara, Kumārī which connects her with the aborginals.
6. She is called *Visa hari.*
7. Bhattasali, *op. cit.*, p. 223; The learned scholar has also shown the similarity between Manasa and Sarasvatī—Both being associated with Swan—both are Manasaputrī of Brahma.
8. Vogel.. *op. cit.*, p. 278.
9. Gupta, B.A., *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*, p. 148.

an ancient origin. It is, therefore, more convincing to hold that snake worship in the above mentioned form was prevalent in Bengal as also in other parts of India from a very long time and it was only in the later period that such worship was associated with Goddess Manasā.[1] A large number of stone images of Manasā of the 10th-12th Century, that have been found throughout Bengal, also supports the established character of her cult during this period. Her images can also be noticed represented outside Bengal and in Orissa, there is a representation of Nāgamātā with a grownup lad on her lap.[2] Marshall points out to an interesting sculpture of black basalt from Birbhum district of Bengal, where the goddess has been shown with her son on her lap and two serpents on both the sides, one may be representing sage Jaratkāru in serpent guise and other her brother Vāsukī. Here identification of Jaratkāru in the guise of serpent may be doubled. Manasā, therefore, undoubtedly influenced the religious belief of the common folk in Bengal. In his book '*The Ritual Art of the Brates of Bengal*' Sudhansu Kumar Ray, shows how in terracotta representation and in Alpanā this goddess occupied a prominent place in Bengal.[5]

ṢAṢṬHI

Ṣaṣṭhī is another prominent folk goddess of Eastern India and her Cult too has a strong hold in Bengal. She is essentially, a mother goddess and has definitely folk-origin. She is the goddess of married women who assist at child birth. She is, therefore, the guardian of young children. She is naturally represented as a golden-complexioned woman with a child in her arms, and her *vāhana* is a cat.[6] In a year six times festivals in her honour are held, in addition to which women who have lost all their children by death worship her monthly.[7] She, therefore, appears to be presiding over the welfare of newly born children and her ordinary representative is said to be 'a rough stone as big as man's head, smeared with red paint, and set at the foot of the sacred *Vaṭa* tree."[8] Such a form of worship decidedly shows its remote origin like Manasā. Whether this cult too had a foreign origin is a matter of enquiry, on which nothing can be said with certainty. Her cult is similar to that of Manasā in Bengal. Asutosh Bhattacharya observes that 'like Manasā and Mangal Caṇḍī, Ṣaṣṭhī is a local popular deity. Saṣṭhī has found a niche in one or two later day Sanskrit Purāṇas exactly in the manner in which Manasā and Mangal Caṇḍī have secured a place in the later Purāṇas'.[1] The name Ṣaṣṭhī cannot be found in the ancient Sanskrit *Purāṇa* or literature, except the later *Puraṇas* like *Devībhāgavata* and *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* wherein her name is referred.[2]

---

[1] Bhattasali places the aryanisation of Manasā cult in 10th-11th Cent. A.D. On the basis of the biographer of Chaitanya he informs that worship of Manasā was used to be performed during Chaitanay's time (15th Cent. A.D). In south-east Bengal Vijaya Gupta, of Phulla Sri who is the most famous poet of Manasā song states that the first of the Manasā song was one eyed Hari Dutta. He places Hari Dutta in 11th-12th Cent. A.D. (op. cit. p. 22 .

[2] Sivarammurti. C., *Parallels and Opposites in Indian Iconography*, p. 94. She is Manasa with her child Astika in her lap.

[3] *ASIAR*, 1926-27 p. 209

[4] Dr Banerjea holds that (Padmāvati, the *Sāssana* devatā of the 23rd Jina Paravanatha is like him associated with Snakes and there little doubt that her Hindu Counterpart is the fold goddess Manaski one of whose names is also Padmavati or Padma. *cf*. DHI, p. 563.

[5] Pages, 2, 26, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40 plates XII, A.b; XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVIIa, XVIII; figs. 11 (page 37).

[6] Wilkins. *Hindu Mythology* (Vedic & Puranic), p. 397.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 397, also see B A. Gupta, *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*.

[8] Allen, Grant *The Evolution of the Idea of God*. 1931, p. 77.

Ṣaṣṭhī, therefore, though came later into Āryan fold, her worship had a wider prevalence than goddess Manasā. She more likely became popular like Hāritī. Both may be identical.[3] Ṣaṣṭhī, is worshipped on the Sixth day[4] of the birth of a child and that also not in anthropomorphic form but in a diagram, prepared with the help of cow dung and vermillion, though her anthropomorphic representation is also not unknown. And her images were discovered from different regions of India. From Rajoana one figure of Ṣaṣṭhī was discovered with a *liṅgam* and a long slab of the Navagraha or Nine planets.[5] A finely preserved figure of Ṣaṣṭhī or Bhavānī, called simply Devī with a child in her lap was discovered from a place South of Lakhisarai Railway Station.[6] Cunningham found Ṣaṣṭhī image and a pedestal dated in Samvat 1193 or A.D. 1136 from Kanaujī. At Ajayagarh a four-armed goddess sitting with a child in her lap has been found associated with five pigs one above another on her right side, and eight pigs in pairs above one another on her left hand which shows that this is 'the figure of Ṣaṣṭhī the goddess of fecundity.'[8] R.C. Majumdar discusses a unique image of Goddess Ṣaṣṭhī[9] having four hands holding a baby and also a leafy branch with a cat looking upwards. The cat appearing in this figure identifies her with Ṣaṣṭhī.[10]

The *vāhana* of this goddess is cat which deserves some enquiry The cat is a very meek animal, but at times ferocious too. In folk tales she is called '*Bilāi*

---

1. *Indian Culture*, Vol. X, p. 162.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 162; Similar to Hāriti in Bengali society one goddess is Jātāpahārini who abducts or kills new born babies (*Ibid.*, p. 162).
4. It is found in *Chaitanya Bhāgavata* (Vridayan Das, *Cait*, *Bhag*. 1.3. Vasumati Edition) that after the birth of Chaitanya the worship of Saṣṭhi was performed on the 6th day (*Ibid.*, p. 163).
5. *ASIR*, III, 1871-72, p. 156. She may be Bhavānī also according to Cunningham.
6. *Ibid.*, III, p. 156.
7. *Ibid.*, I, p. 290.
8. *Ibid.*, XXI, p. 47.
9. Majumdar, R.C. *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 461, pl. XIV 38.
10. Images witn slight variation in iconographical features have also been found and the goddess s shown holding *Vajra*, *cf. Ibid.*, p. 461.

Mausī' (O mother's sister) almost a second mother which shows how she is loved by the people. We do not know why, how and when such notions came to be established. Mouse is the *vāhana* of Gaṇeśa, cat is an enemy of mouse. Hence if Ṣaṣṭhi and Gaṇeśa are opposite to each other, we cannot say. We have no doubt tradition of cat goddess inside and outside India. In Egypt she is Maau (or Atet) and in India *Biḍālī*. Swami Sankarananda, finds in cat a solar significance and thinks that the mother of Aditi of the *Vedas*, the earth goddess of the Indus Valley and the mother Kālī and Ṣaṣṭhī of the Modern times are the same and one deity.[1] Such a conclusion is quite bold and it lacks positive evidence.

There is no doubt that Ṣaṣṭhī was a popular Cult of India and as early as 7th Century A.D., her representation and connection with Child's birth is referred to by Bāṇabhaṭṭa. In *Kādambarī*[2] 'the maternity house' (*Sutikā gṛiha*) of Vilāsavatī is said to be decorated with Svastika designs and figures of Saṣṭhī.

Mr. Bhattacharya[3] informs us about the 12 forms of Ṣaṣṭhī worshipped during 12 months of the year : (1) Vaisākha—Dulhā Ṣaṣṭhī; (2) Jyeṣtha—Araṇya (Juṅgla) Ṣaṣṭhī; (3) Aṣāḍha—Koda Ṣaṣṭhī; (4) Sravan—Loṭan Ṣaṣṭhī; (5) Bhadra—Manthan Saṣṭhi; (6) Asvin—Durga Ṣaṣṭhī; (7) Kārtik-Got Ṣaṣṭhī; (8) Agrahaṇya-Mūla Ṣaṣṭhī; (9) Pauṣ-Patai Ṣaṣṭhī; (10) Māgha—Śitalā Ṣaṣṭhī; (11) Phalgun—Aśoka Ṣaṣṭhī; (12) Caitra—Nīl Ṣaṣthī. He further informs us that in some places of Bengal there are places believed to be presided over by Goddess Ṣaṣṭhī, which are known as Ṣaṣṭhītālas and where mothers go to secure the well being of children.[4]

The cult of Ṣaṣṭhī though very popular remained confined to the female community due to her nature. According to the popular legend, it was only the low class poor people who used to perform the worship of this goddess but later on her worship was propagated among the wealthy section of the society also and further it was introduced into royal families. This story may hint at her, originally belonging to low caste people or tribal people. It may be mentioned here that on the sixth day of the bright half of Kartik Chhaṭh festival is celebrated in Bihar and U.P. on this day people gather on the bank of some river or tank and eatables are offered to the setting sun as well as the rising sun. This festival is popularly called as the worship of *Chhatī Māi*. On this day, therefore, Ṣaṣṭhī is worshipped. But actually people offer eatables to Sun-God. Hence some sort of connection appears between Ṣaṣṭhī and the Sun-God.

JYEṢTHĀ

Another important folk goddess is Jyeṣṭhā. She was the popular deity of south

---

1. Swami Sankarananda, *Rigveda Culture of the Prehistoric Indus*, Vol. I, p. 139.
2. *Kadambari* (Parab's edition), p. 142-143. *Ālikhitasvastikabhaktijalamupa racayatā bhagavati Sasthī Devi Kurvatā.*
3. *Indian Culture*, X, p. 163.
4. *Ibid.*, 163.
5. *Ibid.*, Krisna Ram Das composed his *Sasthī Mangala* in 1601 of the Saka Era or 1679 A.D.

India, but her worship there, is now practically obsolete. The origin of the Cult of Jyeṣṭhā appears to burried into remote past. However, her worship is certainly as old as *Baudhāyana Gṛihya Sūtra*,[1] in which her worship has been elaborately described. She is described here as *Jyeṣṭhā, Kapila patnī, Kumbhī, Jyayā, Hastimukhā, Vighnapārṣada, Nirṛiti*, having lions attached to her chariot and tigers following her.[2] These different names of the goddess are quite interesting. She is Kapilā patnī because she was taken for his wife by Kapila when she came out of the ocean at the time of the churning of the ocean before Lakṣmī. She is Jyeṣṭhā because she is elder to Lakṣmī. It is difficult to explain the word *Jyayā*. But the words *Hasṭimukhā, Vighnapārasada* and *Nirṛiti* occurring for her are significant. She is an inauspicious goddess and an interesting story about her birth and life is told in the *Liṅga Purāṇa*.[3] According to it she was married to sage Dussaha, who soon found that she was loath to hear the praises of and prayers to the gods Viṣṇu and Śiva and was averse to encourage a good deed. Mārkaṇḍeya, however, advised him to take her to places where all sorts of evil and inauspicious things were being done (including shrines where non-vedic forms of worship were performed).[4] It is further said that when she was abondoned by sage Dussaha, she was advised by Viṣṇu to visit those people who were exclusive worshippers of him and who did not pay homage to Śiva, thus Jyeṣṭhā became a Vaiṣṇava deity, though due to her evil character, she was dreaded by Viṣṇu[5] even. Dr. Banerjea observes : 'This popular myth evidently concocted with a deep sectarian bias unwillingly hints at the manner of introduction of such goddess cults among the orthodox sectaries.'[6] She is therefore, undoubtedly a late adoption of Vaiṣṇavism and her malevolent character is established.

She is called Nirriti and we definitely know that Nirṛiti is a goddess of disease, destruction, and misfortune in the *Ṛigveda*,[7] which also shows her malevolent character. The other three appellation, *Kuṁbhī*, *Hastimukhā* and *Vighna pārṣada* give a different suggestion. In our opinion in some remote past Gaṇeśa and Jyeṣṭhā belonged to the same class[8] and must have been the chief deities of a particular tribe residing somewhere in Central Deccan. The above three appellations carry the same meaning. Gaṇeśa is elephant-headed and our Jyeṣṭhā too, Gaṇeśa is also called *Vighnarāja* and Jyeṣṭhā is called *Vighnapārṣada i.e.* in counsel of

---

[1] *Baudhāyana Gṛihya Sūtra*—edited by Shamasastri, pp. 294-96.

[2] *Ibid., Yasyaṣiṃbha rathe Yukta Vyaghra–acascapyanugaminaḥ.*

[3] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 382.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 382

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 382-83. Viṣṇu had to mutter Rudra mantra in order to protect himself from the baneful influence of Jyeṣṭhā.

[6] Ibid p. 383–He is even reminded of Jara and Hāritī.

[7] Mecdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 120—Nirṛiti, Disease, Dissolution, appears about twelve times in the *RV* as a personification of presiding over death; *AV*, I. 31 2 Griffith, *AV*, p. 36 Nirṛiti, Decay or destruction personified, the Goddess of misfortune. Death and Corruption.'

[8] There origin also is quite uncertain and we come across different accounts regarding it.

Vighna. One is the lord of obstracles and the other is his adviser. *Kumbhī* is a word derived from root *Kumbha* and *kumbha* also means the upper portion of an elephant's head.[1] Not only this but in iconographic texts also as Gopinath Rao[2] shows from *Amsumadbhedagāmā*, *Suprabhedagāmā*, *Viṣṇudharmottara*, *Purvakaranagāmā*, that She should be shown with two arms, nose, sagging lips, long and pendulous breasts and belly and Rao has also illustrated a few mediaeval reliefs of Jyeṣṭhā which correspond to a great extent with her textual descriptions. Gaṇeśa is also called *lambodara* (long-bellied), Jyeṣṭhā too has a long belly. She is long-nosed and with sagging lips which very much speak of her being *Hastimukhā*. The above discussion may bring us to the conclusion that both these deities belonged to the same family who later on were adopted by the Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites. It is interesting to note here that in the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[3] Jyeṣṭhā appears to be one of the numerous Mātṛikās created by Śiva to drink the blood of Andhakāsura. We may find in these *Hastimukhā* and *Hastimukha* deities some tribal affiliation and elephant-head (as we find in the case of Gaṇeśa) may mark their totemic origin.[4]

She is associated with lions and tigers which definitely shows her connections with forest-dwellers and proves her tribal origin (probably with the aboriginals). A Goddess whose chariot is driven by lions and is followed by tigers, is definitely the goddess having control over the wild beasts—Mother of Beasts in this connection. She is, therefore, a protector against wild beasts and must have been once popular with the forest dwellers. She is crowbannered (*Kākadhvajasamayukta*) is accompanied by her children (*kanyāputranvitā*) and also Kālī's wife, riding on a donkey (*khararudha kalehpatnī*).[5] And we have a number of iconographical

---

1. *Kumbhī* means the frontal globe on the fore-head of an elephant—Gode, P.K. and Karve C.G., Apte's *The practical Sanskrit English Dictionary*, pt. I, p. 584.
2. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I-II, pp. 394-400; An explanation of her worship is found in *Śaivāgamas*, *the Siddhanta Saravali* of *Trilocana* Sivacārya, where she is said to assume eight forms representing eight tattvas (for details see *ibid*., p. 398)
3. Matsya Puraṇa, 179, 10-32.
4. Chattopadhyaya, D., *Lokāyata*, p. 140 : 'the hypothesis of Gaṇeśa becoming a god as a result of the elephant's assuming sovereignty over the other tribes (including rats), cannot but be very strange' (p. 142)—Chattopadhyaya informs us about Mātaṅgas leaving impression on early Punch-markedcoins (p. 142). Kosambi suggests that the Kosalan coinage reveals the gradual establishment of the Matanga (Elephant) dynasty—(An Introduction to the *Study of Indian History*, p. 149). In this connection we cannot ignore the elephant headdress appearing on the Indo-Greek coins. Does it show that Matangas or tribes with elephant-head totem lived in the N.W. part of India.
5. Corw, lion, elephant faces ganas are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (*Satyaparva*, 45. 76) as Skanda's attendants—it is interesting to note that donkey is also associated with Christ—This association with donkey has been taken to signify more by some scholars.

representation of this goddess corresponding to the given description in the texts of the medieval period and Rao has illustrated a few of her reliefs.[1]

Two things about the cult of Jyeṣṭhā is well-established—firstly, its popularity in the South and secondly, its late adoption in the Vaiṣṇava fold. For one of the *Alavārs* (Tamil Vaiṣṇava saints) Tondaradipoddi by name 'complained in his songs about the foolishness of the common people[2] who worshipped such goddesses of lowly origin for happiness and prosperity, when they could easily obtain supreme bliss by praying to Lord Viṣṇu.'[3] Such a remark shows that the orthodox Vaiṣṇavism had to struggle hard in the south against the local gods and goddesses. The story regarding its origin from the ocean, her original character[4] and a compromise when Viṣṇu allowed oblations to her by all the Vaiṣṇavas, shows that she was adopted late, perhaps because without making a compromise with her cult Vaiṣṇavism faced some difficulty in being accepted by the common folk.

A third thing pointed out by Dr Banerjea about this cult is quite fascinating. The learned scholar has tried to establish a link between this south Indian goddess Jyeṣṭhā and north Indian goddess Hāritī and Śitalā.[5] According to him ground lost by her 'in her homeland was gained by her another name, Śitalā in Eastern and Western parts of India *viz.* Bengal, Orissa, Gujerat[6] etc. Śītalā contains a few notable characteristics of Jyeṣthā as having donkey as *vāhana* sweeping broom and a pitcher as emblems, and adorned with a winnowing fan on her head.[7] Banerjea thinks, therefore, that Jyeṣthā became Śitalā.[8] Such a transformation is not altogether improbable. But we do not have any specific proof except some iconographic similarity.

Let us now conclude our discussion of the folk goddesses. Besides these important cults a large number of such cults existed all over India and to mention all of them is not practically possible and is also out side the scope of the subject at hand. We may, however, mention the cult of Māgadheśvari prevalent in the

---

1. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, Vol. I-II, pls. CXXI, CXXII, CXXIII, She is frequently represented in Pallava and early Chola Art.
2. This shows her folk character.
3. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 382.
4. She was first married to Kapila and so she is Kapila-patnī-Kapila who is the propounder of Sānkhya-Philosophy (a materialistic approach) and she had, therefore, a non-Vedic character.
5. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*. p. 383
6. *Ibid.*, p. 383 foot note 1; The *Pranāma mantra* for Śitalā, *namāmi śitalām devīm rāsbhāsthām digaṁbarim marjjanikalasopetām sūrpalankṛitāmastakāṁ*.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 385.
8. *IHQ*, 1938, Jyeṣṭhā may also partially be recognised in the Kṣanika image of Alaksamī beaten out on the night of *Dipāvalī*.

districts of Chittagong which probably had a remote origin in Magadha or south Bihar.[1]

We have noted one thing common in all these cults, originally they were having malevolent character which was subsequently changed to give them a benevolent character—prerequisite of a Mother Goddess.

---

[1] *Man in India*, III, p. 229.

CHAPTER 9

THE SAKTA—PĪṬHAS

The *Śākta Pīṭhas*[1] are essentially the *Śākta* pilgrimages (*tīrtha sthānas*). Their number varies in different works and with the change in number, the conception also chānges to some extent. In later works fifty-one *pithas* are mentioned, which were considered to be the favourite resorts of the Mother Goddess, known by different names.[2] And all these Mother Goddesses are connected with Śiva as his spouse. We have also a tradition of one hundred and eight such *tīrthas* as preserved in the *Matsya Purāṇas* (Ch. XIII) associated with some goddess. But originally these *pīthas* appear to have been used as objects of aniconic worship.[3]

Naturally we find, in the earliest stage of history, *pīthas* associated with the *Yoni* and *Sthana* of the Mother Goddess. In the *Mahābhārata*[4] three *Śākta trīthas* are mentioned, associated with *Yoni* and *Sthana* of *Śakti.* These are the *Yoni Kuṅḍas* at the Bhimasthāna near the Panchanada (Punjab) and Udyatparvata, and the *Sthanakunda* at Gourī-Śikhara. The identification of these *tīrthas* and their location is somewhat difficult. D.C. Sirkar[5] is tempted to locate Udyatparvata in Gayā region and Gaurī Śikhara with the peak of that name placed by the Pīthanirṇaya in the Kāmarupa (Assam), as both of them seem to be located by the *Mahābhārata* in Eastern India. The location of Udyatparvata in Gayā does not appear to be very appropriate. Udyatparvata is connected with the worship of *Yoni.* And we have a tradition of *Yoni* worship in Kāmarupa. (The Shrine of goddess Kāmākhyā. 3 miles from Gauhati).[6] The association of *Yoni* cult with Kāmarūpa is mentioned in *Kālikapurāṇa* and *Yoginī Tantra* also. It is, therefore,

---

1. Dr D.C. Sirkar in his article 'The *Sākta Pīthas*' published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, letters, Vol. DIV, no. 1, 1948 issued in December, 1948, has discussed this problem in detail. Here he, therefore, gives a short account of the *Pīthas* in order to give a full picture of the subject.
2. *e.g.* Devi, Sakti, Durgā, Pārvatī, Umā, Ambikā, Aparṅā, Kālī, Gauri etc.—represented as the wives of Siva.
3. *JRASB*, letters, Vol. XIV, p. 3, no. 1.
4. III, 82, 93-85; III 84, 93-95 and 151-53; also *JRASB*, letters, XIC, pp. 8-9.
5. Sirkar, D.C., *op. cit.*, p. 9.
6. The temple does not enshrine any image of the goddess but in a cave within the temple, in a corner stands a black stone on which *Yoni* has been sculptured (*Siddha Bharti*, II, p. 44).

reasonable to locate Udyatparvata in Kāmarūpa and identify it with the Nīlāchala[1] the place where Sati's genital organ fell. Moreover we do not have any tradition of *Yoni* worship in Gayā region whereas in Kāmarūpa we still have such tradition, and mysterious legands are connected with the shrine of Kāmākhyā (popularly known as Kārū Kāmākhyā).[2] We may locate Gaurī Śikhara in Gayā region or somewhere in the Eastern sector of the Himālayas.[3] The Bhīmasthāna in Punjab was known as the resort of Bhimādevī besides its being *Yoni Kuṅḍa*, just as Udyatparvata was the abode of Kāmākhyā of Kāma. It appears that association of Bhīmaasthāna and Udyatparvata with *Yoni* cult had an origin in remote past. It was only in the later phase that both these tīrthas were made abode of some local goddesses too when perhaps it came to be known after the name of the area and a necessity to associate these tīrthas with some goddess in anthropomorphic from arose. According to the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* goddess Bhīmadevī belonged to Himāchala.[4] In the *Si-yu-ki* also we find reference of this goddess and her seat in 7th Century A.D. According to the great Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chuang, 'About 50-*li* (nearly 8 miles) to the North-East of Palusha was a great mountain which had a likeness of Maheśvara's spouse Bhīmadevi of dark blue stone.'[5] Hence we have seen that these three *tirthas* had a long and well established history. Among them Goddess Kāmākhyā still maintains the tradition.

It is essential to mention here the *Purāṇic* account of the origin of these *Śakti Pīṭhas*. According to the popular belief the *piṭhas* are connected with the limbs of Sati, wife of Śiva and daughter of Dakṣa Prajāpati. Sati went to her father's house uninvited and there she had to face the insult of her husband, which resulted in her death. This enraged Śiva who brought about destruction of the sacrifice and began to roam aimlessly with the dead body of his wife on his shoulders out of the grief for his wife. This created anxiety among gods. Viṣṇu with his *cakra* cut the corpse into pieces and scattered the limbs all over India. And all those places, where the limbs fell, became *Śakti pīṭhas*. It is further said that Śiva was mad after his wife that he transformed himself into the forms of Bhairavas and settled in their vicinity to keep a watch over the parts of his wifes'

---

1. According to the *Kālikāpurāṇā* (LXIV 59) the mountain represented Siva and when the organ fell it turned blue.
2. Kārukāmākhya appears to be a short form of Kāmrūpa Kāmrūpa Kāmākhyā.
3. Sirkar may be correct in identifying this peak with such named peak placed by the Pithanirnaya in Kāmrūpa test (Sirkar, *op. cit.*; p. 9) but its identification with the popular Kāmarūpa centre of Saktas cannot be established.
4. *Mārkandeya Purāṇa*, 91, 45.45; *The Sāktu Pīthas*—Sirkar, D.C., Appendix II, V. 22.
5. Watters, *On Yuan Chawang's Travel in India*. Vol. I, p. 221 "The *Mahāmayuri*, a Sanskrit Buddhist text composed in the early centuries of the Christian era, possibly also refers to that of her consort in Sivabhadra in extreme North-West of India *Cf. Journal Asiatique*, Vol. XV, 1915, p. 370)"—Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 495 also.

body.[1] This story shows that primarily these *pīṭhas* concerned only with the aniconic form of the *Śakti* worship but Bhairavas were worshipped in anthropomorphic form. Dr D.C. Sirkar has tried to trace the origin and development of the legend concerned from *Ṛigveda* even. He has pointed out that the accounts given in different sources differ slightly at places.[2] The early accounts[3] though mention the different forms of the goddess they differ in many ways *e.g.* Sati died, the insult episode, even some sources do not mention the relation between Dakṣa and Śakti (*e.g. Mbh*).

We have seen that originally there were only three *pīṭhas* connected with the worship of Mother-Goddess (in aniconic form). In some early Tantras we get reference of four *pīṭhas* (*Catus pīṭha* conception) which may have been associated with a conception of the Sahajayāna school of the Buddhist, according to D.C. Sirkar.[4] Sirkar informs us that four *pīṭhas* are mentioned in the *Hevajra Tāntra* and the *Kālikā Purāṇa* (Ch. 64.43-45);[5] Jālandhara, Odiyāna, Purṇagiri and Kāmarūpa according to the former and Odra (seat of Kātyāyani and god Jagannātha), Jalaśaila (seat of Chaṇḍī and Mahādeva) Purāṇa or Purṇaśaila (seat of Goddess Purṇeśvarī and Mahānātha) Kāmarūpa (Kameśvarī and Māmeśvara) according to the latter. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* locates them in west, north, south and east respectively. Among them the older three definitely find their place. But the number of *pīṭhas* went on increasing day by day. It was perhaps due to the growing popularity of the cult of Mother Goddess that multiplied the number of the *pīṭhas*. In one section of the *Kālikāpurāṇa* (Ch. 18 Vs. 42.51) even seven *pīṭhas* have been mentioned including the four, already described.[6] An eleventh century *Tantric* work mentions ten *pīṭhas*, which add to our knowledge. Six new seats of Mother goddess worship *i.e.*. Vārānasī, Jvalanti, Māyāvatī, Madhupurī, Ayodhyā and Kāñchī.[1] In another work some eighteen *pīṭhas* are mentioned which show their geographical distribution throughout the length and breadth of India. A fairly large number of *pīṭhas*, known as *Siddha pīṭhas*, have been mentioned in the *Kubjikā Tantra*, which further adds more places as seat at Mother Goddess worship.[2] In other *Tantras* the number increased to fifty (according to the *Jñanārnava Tantra*) and the *Tantrasāra* made fifty-one by splitting Merugiri Pīṭha into Merupīṭha and Giri Pīṭha.[3] The *Pīthanirṇaya* or the *Mahpīṭhanirupaṇa* adheres to this number of the Pīṭhas but the 'list itself is independent of the earlier list of the Pīṭhas.'[4] The number further reached to 108 in some of the *Purāṇas*. Sirkar sees in this number an attempt to endow the deity with 108 names.'[5]

---

[1] Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 495, fig. 2—Such an account appears only in the later *Purāṇas* and *Tantras*. (*Devī Bhāgavata*, VII. Ch. *30*, *Kālikā Purāṇa*, Ch. 18 etc.) Her it is mentioned that Brahmā Viṣnu and Sani made a conspiracy and entered into the dead body and cut it bit by bit. *Cf.* Sirkar, *op. cit.*, p. 6-7.

[2] *JRASB*, XIV, p. 5.

[3] Kalidasa (*Kumarasmbhava* I.21) accounts her death by fire, whereas in others she died by *Yoga*. The *Mahābhārta* (XII, 282.83) is a bit different. *Matsyā Purāṇā* (Ch. XIII) gives a story mentions the 108 forms of Pīṭhas of the Great Goddess—Similar account may be found in the *Brahma Purāṇa* (Ch. XXXIX). *Padma Purāṇa Sristikahṅḍa* (Ch. V), *Kurma Purāṇa* (I. Ch. XV) *Brahmaṅḍa Purāṇa* (Ch. XXXI).

[4] *op. cit.*, p. 11. A Sahajayāna text entitled *Chatuspitha* speaks of four Pithas as atmapītha, Parapītha, Yogapitha and Guhyapitha and deals with the various kinds of *Vajarasāttva's* intercourse with the *Yogīnis* such as Prajñapāramitā and others (*Ibid.*, p. 11).

[5] *Ibid.* p. 12.

[6] Sirkar, D.C., *op. cit.*, p. 17. The seven *pīṭhas* as mentioned in the *Kālikā Purāṇas* :
   (i) Devikūṭa where Sati's two feet fell—here devī is known as Mahābhāgā.
   (ii) Uddiyāna—where two things fell—Devī is Kātyāyanī.
   (iii) Kāmagiri where the pudendum muliebre fell—Devī is Kāmākhyā.
   (iv) a locality on the eastern boarder of Kāmarupa where the naval fell—Devī is Dikkaravāsīnī.
   (v) Jālaṅdhara where the two breasts fell—Devī is Chaṇḍī.
   (vi) Purṇagiri where the neck and shoulder fell—Devī is Purneśvari.
   (vii) a locality on the bordedrs of Kāmarupa where the head fell—Devī is Lalita Kanta.

In these 108 names of the Goddess we may find an attempt for the identification of the Great Goddess 'with various goddesses and with the female forms (*Śaktis* or energising powers) of many gods worshipped in different parts of India.'[6] A complete list of the 108 names of the Great Mother associated with a particular locality is found in the *Matsyapurāṇa*.[7] When Dakṣa asked Sati about the *tīrthas* connected with her and the names by which the *Ādya Śakti* (*Jaganmātā*) could be prayed, Sati ennumerated her 108 names associated with different places, though she also said that she was omnipresent.[8] The list is as follows : (1) Viśālākṣī in Vārāṇasī, (2) Liṇgadhāriṇī in Naimiṣaraṇya, (3) Lalitā devī in Prayāg, (4) Kāmākṣī Devī on Gandhamādana Parvata, (5) Kumudā devī in Mānsarovara tīrtha, (6) Viśvakāyā devī in Ambara, (7) Gomatī Devī in Gomanta, (8) Kāmacāriṇī devī in Mandaragiri, (9) Madotkaṭa devī in Chitraratha, (10) Jayantī devī in Hastināpura, (11) Gaurī Devī in Kānyakubja, (12) Rambhā Devī in Malaya Parvata, (13) Kīrtimatī Devī in Ekāmbhaka, (14) Viśvā devī in Viśveśvara, (15) Pūruhūta devī in Puṣkarakṣetra, (16) Mārga dāyinī devī in Kedāratīrtha, (17) Nandā devī on the back part of Himavān, (18) Bhadra Karṇikā devī in Gokarṇa tīrtha, (19) Bhavānī in Sthāneśvara (20) Vilvapatrikā devī in Vilvala tīrtha, (21) Mādhavī devī on Śrīśailagiri, (22) Bhadrā devī in Bhadreśvara tīrtha, (23) Jayā Devī in Varāhaśaila mountain, (24) Kamalā devī in Kamalālaya tīrtha, (25) Rudrāṇī devī in

---

1. *Ibid.*, p. 16-17 (*Rudrayāmala*—a work of 1052 A.M.) Śankarācārya is said to have changed the priest at Kañchī temple who was following left-hand *Tāntric* Practices and appointed a Smarta Brahmaṇa in his place *cf.* Chattopadhyaya, S., *Evolution of Theistic sects in Ancient India*, p. 164.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
7. Chapter XIII, Vs. 26-64.
8. *Ibid.*, Vs. 24-25

Rudrakoṭi Tīrtha, (26) Kālī devī on Kālañjara hill, (27) Kapilā devī in Mahāliṅga tīrtha, (28) Mukuṭeśvarī devi in Markoṭa, (29) Mahā devī in Śālagrāma tīrtha, (30) Jalapriyā devī in Śiva liṅga tīrtha, (31) Kumārī devī in Māyāpurī tīrtha, (32) Lalitā devī in Santāna tīrtha, (33) Utapalākṣī devī in Sahasrākṣa Tīrtha, (34) Mahotpalā devī in Kamalākṣa tīrtha, (35) Maṅgalā devī in Gaṅgā;[1] (36) Bimalā Devi in Puruṣottama, (37) Amoghākṣī devī in Vipāśā, (38) Paṭalā devī in Puṇḍra Vardhana tīrtha, (39) Nārāyaṇī Devī in Suparśva tīrtha, (40) Bhadrasundarī devī in Vikūta tīrtha, (41) Vipulā Devī in Vipula tīrtha, (42) Kalyaṇī devī in Malayācala, (43) Koṭavī Devī in Koṭi tīrtha, (44) Sugandhā devī in Mādhavavana, (45) Trisandhyā devī in Godāśrama tīrtha, (46) Ratipriyā devī in Gaṅgādvāra, (47) Śivānandā devī in Śivakuṇḍa tīrtha, (48) Nandinī Devī on Devikātaṭa, (49) Rukmiṇī devī in Dvārāvatīpurī, (50) Rādhā devī in Vṛindāvana, (51) Devakī devī in Mathurā purī, (52) Parameśvarī devi in Pātāla, (53) Sītā Devī in Citrakūṭa,[2] (54) Vindhyavāsinī devī on Vindhyācala, (55) Ekavīrādevī on Sahyādri-giri, (56) Candrikā devī in Hariścandra, (57) Ramaṇā devī in Rāma tīrtha, (58) Mṛigāvatī devī in Yamunā, (59) Mahālakṣmī devī in Karavīra Tīrtha, (60) Umā devī in Vināyaka tīrtha, (61) Arogā devī in Vaidyanatha dhāma, (62) Maheśvarī devī in Mahākāla tīrtha, (63) Abhayā devī in Uṣṇatīrthas, (64) Amritā devī in Vindhya Kandarā, (65) Māṇḍevī devī in Maṇḍavya tīrtha, (66) Svāhā devī in Maheśvarapura, (67) Pracaṇḍā devī in Chagalākhaṇḍa tīrtha, (68) Chaṇḍikādevī in Makarandaka tīrtha, (69) Varārohā devī in Someśvara tīrtha, (70) Puṣkarāvatī devi in Prabhāsakṣetra, (71) Devamātā devī in Sarasvatī, (72) Mahābhāgā devī in Samudrataṭavartī Mahālaya tīrtha, (73) Piṅgaleśvarī devī in Payoṣṇī, (74) Simhikā devī in Kṛitaṣauca tīrtha, (75) Yaśaskarī devī in Kārttikeya tīrtha, (76) Lolā devī in Uttalāvartakakṣetra, (77) Subhadrādevī in Śona Saṅgama, (78) Mātā in Siddhapur, (79) Aṅganā Lakṣmī devī in Bharatāśrama, (80) Viśvamukhī devī in Jālandhara tīrtha, (81) Tārā devī in Kiṣkindhā parvata, (82) Tuṣṭi devī in Devadāruvana, (83) Medhā devī in Kāśmīradeśa, (84) Bhīmādevī on Himālaya, (85) Puṣṭi devī in Viśveśvara tīrtha, (86) Śuddhi devī in Kapālamochan Tīrtha, (87) Mātā devī in Kāvyāvarohaṇa tīrtha, (88) Dhvani devī in Śaṅkhoddhāra tīrtha, (89) Dhṛiti devī in Piṇḍāraka tīrtha, (90) Kālā devī in Candrabhāgā, (91) Śivakāriṇī devī in Achhoda tīrtha, (92) Amṛita devī in Veṇā, (93) Urvaśī devī in Badarī tīrtha, (94) Auṣadhī devī in Uttarakurupradeśa, (95) Kuśodakā devī in Kuśadvīpa, (96) Manmathā devī in Hemakūṭa giri, (97) Satyavādinī devī in Mukuṭatīrtha, (98) Vandanīyā devī in Aśvattha, (99) Nidhi devī in Vaiśravaṇālaya tīrtha, (100) Gāyatrī devī in Vedavādana tīrth, (101) Pārvatī devī near Śivajī, (102) Indrāṇī devī in Devaloka, (103) Sarasvatī devī in Brahmā's mouths, (104) Prabhā devī in Suryabimba, (105) Vaiṣṇavī devī in

---

[1] Yuan Chiwang was also once attacked by thugs in Ganges when he was proceeding from Ayodhyā and they wanted to sacrifice him to the goddess Durga *cf.* Watters. *On Yuan Chawng.*, i, p. 360.

[2] Rama and Sita are associated with Ayodhya and Citrakūta.

Mātās, (106) Arundhatī devī in Satīs (107) Tilottamā devī in women, (108) Brahmakalā devī in Citta. She further said that in every living being she lives as *Śakti devī*.

The above list of the goddess furnishes as interesting assessment of the prominent goddess associated with the different parts of India. D.C. Sirkar has given also the different variations in the names found in different sources.[1] Thus a complete list has been provided by him. The learned scholar remarks that, "The fact that even in an attempt to find out 108 actual tirthas that could be associated with Śakti rather arbitrarily, the author does not refer to Kamarūpa and Uddiyāna, may point to the author's aversion far these out and out tirthas. It cannot possibly be held that the text was composed before Uddiyāna and Kamarupa attained eminence.'[2] We beg to differ on some points here with the scholar, though the scholar is correct to hold that the text was composed after Uddiyāna and Kāmarūpa had already attained eminence. It is not correct to hold that Kāmarūpa and Uddiyāna the famous *pīṭhas* are omitted in this list due to aversion for these *tīrthas*. On the contrary, we find Kāmākṣī, Kāmukā or Kāmukī mentioned; associated with Gandhamādana. We propose to associate these goddesses with the famous Pitha of Kamarupa.[3] The *Kālikā Purāṇa* gives other variations of the goddess Kāmakhyā *e.g.*, Kāma, Kāmadā[4] etc. And we can easily identify Kāma with Kāmakī.[5] Similarly may be the case with other Pīṭhas. In the later development of the cult, new legends were formed to explain the justification of a particular *pīṭha* which can be noted atleast in the case of the famous original *pīṭhas* (three or four). The spread of *Tāntricism* further necessitated the establishment of *pīṭhas* in different areas. In the *Purāṇas* we find an attempt to enumerate all possible goddesses known in different localities and to identify them with the *Ādya-Śakti*. Still in India we find many local goddess cults prevailing and popular.[6] And if any new *Purāṇa* is written out there would definitely be an attempt to accommodate all such new goddess.

---

1. *Matsya Purāṇa* (Ch. XIII, vs. 23-53); *Devībhāgavata* (Bk: VII, ch. 30, Vs. 55.83); *Padma Purāṇa*, *Sristtikhaṇḍa* (Ch. XVII, Vs. 184.211) : *Skanda Purāṇa*. *Ayantya Khanda* (Revakhaṅḍa, ch. 98, Vs. 64-92).
2. Sirkar. D.C., *op. cit.*, p. 29-31.
3. also known popularly as Kāmākhyā devi.
4. LXIV 2.
5. The identification of Gāndhamādana parvata may put forward some problem—we may however, identify the particular hill (with the Shrine of Goddess Kāmākhya) with Gandhamadana Parvata. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* no doubt, Gandhamādana Parvata is associated with Badrikāśrama (*Visṇu Purāṇa*, V. 37.34. यव्ददर्याश्रम पुण्यं गन्धामादन पर्वते) ।।
6. In Patna we have two shrines of goddesses known as Bari Patana devi and Chhotti Patanadevī who are popularly worshipped. It may be suggested that some of the goddesses or the pithas were associated with associated with the Stars. We know that in India Sati custom was prevalent and every such place where, Sati burnt hereself must become a place of pilgrimage, and these might have found place in the list of the *Piṭhas*.

CHAPTER 10

RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

The belief in gods and goddesses requires the celebration of its worship also. In India such celebrations[1] are very popular. It has become an essential part of the social and individual life. These festivals have two apparent face values. Firstly, they give an occasion for a social gathering and secondly, they provide enough of entertainment and merry-making. Festivals were celebrated not only in Ancient India but among 'all the nations of the ancient world, a considerable portion of the year was devoted to the solemnization of public festivals, at which the people found in the assemblage of multitude, in the exhibition of games and in religious pageants and ceremonies, a compensation for the want of those more refined entertainments which are created by the necessities and the luxury of a more advanced stage of civilization. Some of these primitive celebrations have retained their hold upon national tastes and feelings long after their origin and meaning were forgotten, and became interwoven with the new conditions of society, with altered manners and institutions, and with a total change of religion'.[2] In this scientific age no doubt the Western world is giving up such festivals, though in place of it other non-religious festivities are cropping up; but in India even to-day such festivities are celebrated with the same archaic character, enthusiasm and pomp. It is interesting to note in this connection that most of the festivals are connected with the worship of Mother Goddess. Perhaps it was because all must be connected with agriculture and hunting in the nascent stage of its origin. Hence while studying a particular festival we have to concentrate upon its nature and not the mythology or the folk-lore. Folk-lores are always connected to suit the demand of the time and also varies from person to person, and place to place. It also depends upon the imaginative capacity of the originator of a lore. The antiquity of story-telling and its allegorical significance is quite old in India. To justify every festival and ritual we have some story, and all such festivals and the origin of the rituals are older than the stories connected with them. B.A. Gupte observes that, 'Some of the popular and general Hindu holidays seem to have been based on changes of season, and others on natural phenomena. Gaṇeśa and Gaurī, for instance, represent the death and resurrection of the season, so do Vaṭasāvitrī, Divālī and Holī. Vasanta-Pañcamī marks the near approach of the summer. Campā Ṣaṣṭhī marks the phenomenon of the rising Sun driving or dispersing a fog; Mahā Śivarātra marks the night on which the Mṛig constellation or Orion is seen in its best aspect'.[1] Many of the festivals, no doubt are connected with some physical phenomenon, but most of them are connected with agriculture and hunting. And thus they are connected with Mother Goddess Cult. Agriculture means to invoke Earth Mother and similarly hunting means to please *Van Devi*. We shall presently examine, therefore, some of them.

---

[1] B.A. Gupte, *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials* is the most informative book on the subject. Here, only a few of the important ones have been mentioned.

[2] *JRAS*, 1946-48, Vol. 9, p. 60.

SARASVATI PŪJĀ :

On the fifth day of *Māgha* Goddess Sarasvatī is worshipped. This day is also called *Vasanta Pañcamī* or *Śrī Pañcamī*. Sarasvatī is worshipped nowadays as she is considered to be the goddess of Learning and, therefore, in each and every educational institution her worship is performed. Every student on this day cleans his pen, ink-stand and books. Either an image of the goddess is installed or books ink-stand and pen, etc., only become the sole object of adoration or a water-jar is placed in place of image.[2] The two names of this festival require attention. This day is also called *Śrī Pañcamī*, which shows that originally it was connected with Śrī, the wife of Viṣṇu and the goddess of prosperity and abundance.[3] When and how this was transferred to Sarasvatī is difficult to answer. However, we have evidences to show that there was difference of opinion regarding the day of the worship of Sarasvati. No doubt, the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* (II.4.230, 34a) prescribes *Śukla Pañcamī* day of the month of *Māgha* (माघस्य शुल्कपञ्चभ्याम्) and the day on which a child's education is formally to begin.[4] According to the *Skanda Purāṇa* Sarasvatī as installed in her area from at the *Sārasvata tīrtha* should be worshipped on the *aṣṭamī* and *caturdaśī*.[5] The *Agni Purāṇa* prescribes the *tīrtiyā-tithi* of the month of *Jyeṣtha* for the worship of Sarasvatī.[6] The *Padma Purāṇa* and the *Matsya Purāṇa* have prescribed *Pañcamīs* of each *pakṣa* of a month for her worship as a part of the Sārasvata-*Vrata*.[7] *Pañcami* of every fortnight of a month, to be an occasion for her worship, shows that no particular date for her worship was fixed. In course of time *Śrī Pañcamī* became the day of the worship of Sarasvatī. The name *Vasanta Pañcamī* shows that in this

---

1. Gupte, B.A , *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*, Introduction, p. XV.
2. *JRAS*, 1946-48, Vol. 9, p. 79-81.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Purāna*, VI, No. 1, Jan. 1962, p. 85.
5. *Skanda Purāṇa*, VI, 46.37.
6. *Purāṇa*. IV, No. 1, 1962, p. 85; *Agni Purāṇa*, 178.27.
7. *Ibid.*, *Padma Purāṇa*, V, 22.186; *Matsydpurāṇa*, 55, II.

festival the *Vasanta* is celebrated. This festival marks the end of winter and the beginning of *Vasanta*. The winter season might not have been thought in the past good for the beginning of child education. And just on the departure of winter child education was to begin and therefore *Śrī Pañcamī* which was originally connected with goddess Śrī was noted connected with the worship of the goddess of Learning Sarasvati.[1]

DURGĀ PŪJĀ :

Durgā *Pūjā* is another important festival observed by the Hindus all over India, It is obviously the worship of Mother Goddess. Durga Pūjā is celebrated in the bright half of the month of *Āśvin*. It begins on the first day and ends on the 10th day. The tenth day is called *Vijayā dasamī*. This festival is also called *Navrātra*. It is connected with Rāma's worship of the Devī when he found that as soon as he cut off any of the heads of Rāvaṇa they came back to life again. On the eighth day Rāma could kill Rāvaṇa by the blessings of the Great Goddess and on the tenth day Rāma started back triumphant for his capital.[2] The Mahisāsura mardinī aspect of the Devī is worshipped during this festival. Idols of clay are made. These idols are installed on the first day and are completed by the seventh day; and on tenth day the idols are immersed. During all the ten days its worship is carried out with all pomp and grandeur. In Bengal it is widely celebrated. B.C. Majumdar[3] observes about the *Durgā Pūjā* ritual (as observed in Bengal): 'A plantain tree is covered with a piece of cloth and is posted on the right side of the idol of Durgā. This plantain tree is regarded as goddess *Vana*-Durgā (Durgā who resides is forests), and she is worshipped duly and carefully along with Durgā and other deities associated with her and represented there in the idol exhibition. As to whence this *Vana* Durga came, the Purāṇas are silent, and the priest offers no satisfactory explanation. That this *Vana* Durgā was a goddess of some wild tribes.[4] Majumdar further remarks "that in addition to the image of Durgā, a *Vana* Durgā has to be set up and propitiated, shows that there was something in the origin of the *Pūjā* which recognised a goddess other than the consort of Śiva.'[5] Her worship is definitely followed by animal sacrifices and this also reminds us of her original wild nature.

The details regarding the worship of Durgā in the *Tāntric* form is found in some sections of the works like the *Māyā Tantra*, the *Rudrayāmala* and the *Matsya-*

---

1. *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, (II.4) gives a detailed account of her worship.
2. Gupte, B.A., *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*, p. 185.
3. *JRAS*, 1906, p. 361.
4. We have have alredy discussed while dealing with Goddess Durga that she originally belonged to wild tribes like Pulindas, Śarvaras, etc.
5. *JRAS*, 1906, p. 361.

Sūkta.[1] It is some what difficult to trace exactly the origin of the *Pūjā* in this form. But definitely it is several centuries old. Chakravarty[2] enumerates a number of authors whose works deal with the subject, viz. Jımūtavāhana (11th -12th century so), Śrināthа (15th-16th century A.D.), Sulabani (15th-16th centuiy A.D.), Govindananda (16th century A.D.) and Raghunandana (16th century A.D.).

Another point to be noted regarding the worship of this goddess is that Durgā's worship has some connection with vegetation also. She is *Vana* Durgā, she is, therefore, the goddess of vegetation and fecundity. Not only plantain tree is associated with her but *Vilvā*-tree and barley are also connected with her worship. On the first day of the bright half of the month of *Āśvin* barley seed is planted and on the tenth it is taken out to for distribution to the people as a blessing. Why barley is given importance in the land of rice is an interesting point of enquiry. This may associated Durgā with the land where barley is grown in abundance. However, nothing can be said with certainty except the prominence of Durgā worship in Bihar, Bengal, Mysore and other parts of India. She is decidedly a Great Mother Goddess.

KĀLI PŪJĀ

Kāli-*Pūjā* is also widely prevalent in Bengal and the worship of Kālī is performed 'on different occasions under different names and forms, all fearful and ferocious, manifesting the spirit of destruction which she represents.'[3] She is also worshipped like Durgā by making earthen idols and thrown into water after the worship is over. Among her several form Dakṣina Kālikā is the most popular. In this form she wears a garland of human heads. Her other iconographical feature also make her dreadful, thus in this form terrific one. The worship of this goddess has been widely prescribed for the *Ratanti-catuvdaśī* (14th day of the *Kṛiṣṇapakṣa* of the month of *Māgha*).[4] The worship is offered usually a midnight.[5] Animal sacrifice is a special feature of *śakti* worship, particularly of Kālī worship in Bengal,[6] even human sacrifice is not unknown to her worship.[7] It may here be mentioned that 'Kālī is regarded as the guardian deity against cholera even in some villages in south India, where she is worshipped as the protectress against evil spirits and wild beasts, as the favourite

---

1. Chakravarty, C., *The Tantras—Studies on this Religion and Literature*, p. 94.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
3. Chakravarty, C. *op. cit.*, p. 89.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 93; Whitehead, H., *The Village Gods of South India*, Calcutta, 1916, p. 28. Chakravarty could not find out such awful practice though whitehead mentions.

goddess of bird-catchers and as the boundary goddess who is supposed to ward off any evil which may cause havoc to a village'.[1]

DĪPĀVALĪ

Dīpāvalī[2] is another important festival of India, and is celebrated in each and every part of the country. On this day house tops and streets are illuminated with innumerable earthen lamps. This festival is observed on the last day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Kārtik* (*Amāvasyā*). On this day Lakṣmī is worshipped. In Bengal Kālī *pūjā* is celebrated on this day, perhaps due to the strong hold of Tāntricism. Except Bengal Lakṣmī is worshipped everywhere. The wide prevalence of Lakṣmī worship on this day suggests that originally Lakṣmī was worshipped on this day. Lakṣmī is the goddess of wealth, hence this Pūjā is very popular among the businessmen of India. Gambling is the special feature of this day as Gupte informs.[3] It is auspicious because Śiva played with Pārvatī and lost everything. As the story goes, when Kārttika saw that his father was melancholy, he regained all the wealth from his mother that his father had lost. It was again won by Gaṇeśa playing for his mother Pārvatī. Finally Pārvatī lost everything because Viṣṇu had cheated Pārvati by taking the shape of dice. However, by the intervention of others the anger of Pārvatī was cooled down. She, therefore, pronounced a blessing instead, upon all those who in future played with dice on the first day of *Kārtik*, that they might be successful in all dealings throughout the year.[4] This is ayparently a late introduction—creation of businessmen who play *saṭṭā* (speculation). Many explanations in the form of different stories are given for this festival. Another feature of this festival is that the goddess Alakṣmī is beaten out of the house before Lakṣmī is actually worshipped. The popular meaning, therefore, seems to be that poverty and inauspiciousness are driven out of the house and prosperity and happiness are welcomed in the form of Goddess Lakṣmī—a simple and innocent belief of the common folk. This day may mark the beginning of the winter season and also the harvest season. The crops in the field (particularly paddy) now begin to ripe. And in this festival one may except the welcome of the new crops or a hope for a good harvest—which also means wealth to the agriculturists. This festival is, therefore, equally important for the agriculturists as well as businessmen—hence important for all.

It is no doubt very difficult to trace out the history of this festival, but P.K. Gode[5] has given a chart showing the mention of this festival in different periods.

---

[1] Chakrawarty, C., *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[2] Gode, P.K., *Studies in Indian Cultural History*, (1960), Vol. II., p. 187 ff.

[3] Gupte B.A., *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*, p. 41-42.

[4] Gupte, B.A., *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[5] Gode, P.K., *op. cit.*, pp. 219-26.

The *Kāmasutra* mentions *Yakṣarātrī* as an important festival which is equal to *Divālī* according to Hemacandra. Yaśodhara explains *Yakṣarātrī* as *Sukharātrī*.[1] Śrī Harṣa of Kanauj refers to *Dīpapratipadutsava* in his play Nāgananda,[2] *Nīlamata-purāṇa* mentions *Dīpamata* festival.[3] Somadevasūri (949 A.D.) in his *Yaśastila-karicampu* describes *Dīpotsva*,[4] Śripati a 11th century astronomer refers to *Divālī* in his Marāthī on his own *Jyotīsāratnamālā*.[5] Alberuni gives in his *Tahkik-i-Hind* a detailed description of this festival.[6] As already mentioned Hemacandra (1088-1172) equates *Yakṣarātrī* with *Divālī* or *Dīpālikā*.[7] A thirteenth century Maharastra saint Jñaneśvara refers to *Divālī*, and he compares the illuminations of the *Divālī* with the light of spiritual knowledge.[8] In the *Caturvargacintamāṇi* (*vrata* khanda) of Hemadri, the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* of Merutuṅga and the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abul Fazl, all mention this festival.

Gode has raised a very interesting question with regard to the origin of this festival. He has pointed out a close parallelism between the Hindu and the Jain *Divālī* and he poses a question as to which is older of them.[9] Among the Jains this festival continues for four days. The *Śvetāmbara* Jains polish their ornaments on the first day of the festival. This almost synchronises with the popular notion of purchasing utensils on *phanaterasa*. The third of the festival is connected with the *Moksa* of Mahavira and *Kaivalya* of Gautama Indrabhūti, and on this day the Jains illuminate their houses and worship their acconnt books. Even to the present day on the day of *Divālī* the bussiness men of India worship their account books and houses are illuminated. Hence the modern *Divālī* festival is quite in confermity with the Jaīn *Divālī*. Moreover, Jains are mostly engaged in business. Hence this festival probably was celebrated by the Jains in the beginning and later on Hindus borrowed from the Jains. It is perhaps the pomp and grandeur, which attracted others. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that in the later period Lakṣmī worship was also associated with this festival as Kālī worship was associated in Bengal.

---

1. Gode, P.K., *op. cit* , p. 219.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
3. *Ibid.*
4 *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
9. *Ibid* . p. 195.

GĀY-DĀṆṚ :

The day following this puja *gāy dāṇṛi*[1] festival is celebrated. This is differently called in different regions. In north Bihar it is called *Hurā-Huri*, in some parts of Monghyr district it is called *Hurāhī*. This interesting festival is celebrated in the after-noon. Cows are gaily stamped with circular stains of red and blue on their heads and then a young pig is put before them to be killed. After the pig is killed, it is eaten up by the people. A place in Bihar (Kalyānpur near Bariarpur) elephants along with buffaloes and recently calved cows are brought out and the trumpeting elephants catch up the pig and dash out its brain.[2] In Saran some other method of killing is used. But one thing is clear that in this festival pig is killed by cattle. This must have a special significance. Either it is for the well-being of the cattle wealth or for agricultural produce. Harvesting season begins just after it. The pig is no doubt sacred to the goddess of agriculture or to corn spirit. In almost every part of the world pigs were sacrified and it was associated with goddess of fertility, the Mother Goddess.[3] K.P. Mitra suggests that this festival may be a 'relic of some ceremonial sacrifice offered in the past to the corn-goddess; especially because of its close association with the worship of goddess Kālī, the terrible Mother Goddess, and also with Lakṣmī and Alakṣmī, the celebration of the Feast of Lamps, or divālī.'[4]

He[5] mentions another peculiar mode of worshipping Lakṣmī, the Corn-Goddess current in Bengal and which is done by women only and is called *gārsī vrata*, a corruption of *gārhasthya* (household) *vrata* or *gāruvrata* (*gāru* from *Ghara* ?). 'A remarkable feature of the worship in some cases is the disfiguration of an earthen image of Alakṣmī, whose nose and ears are cut off, after which Lakṣmī, is ceremoniously installed in the house.'[6] In the eastern part of Maimansingh district this worship is recognised as a sort of worship offered to the dead mother-in-law. In the courtyard of the house a small tank is dug, and on its eastern side a rice plant and a *man-kachu* plant (*Alobasia indica*) are planted. At the four corners and the four sides respectively are placed images of four crows and four kites made of rice

---

1. *Indian Antiquary*, Vols. LX, LXI (1931, 1932). Sri K.P. Mitra has discussed this festival and its significance in detail under the title. 'The Gāy-daṇr festival : The cult of the Mother Goddess'.
2. *Ibid.*, LX (1931), p. 188.
3. S.K. Dikshit informs that in Egypt pigs were sacrificed annually to Osiris and to the moon ; the Goddess Isis is represented under the form of sow (a female pig), in Mesopotamia, the moon god is associated with sow, in Crete pig was regularly worshipped, in Greece it was sacred to Demeter, it was also sacred Thea, Gaia, etc. *Cf. The Mother Goddess*, p. 200-201.
4. IA, LXI (1932), p. 231.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

paste. On the weastern side is placed an effigy of a pig.[1] Then a female figure with a baby on its lap is made of rice paste and placed under the rice and *man-kachu* plants. This is regarded as the representation of mother-in-law. The votaries then make certain paraphernalia and then *Vrata-Kathā* is recited after which pig is sacrified and all other images are buried in the tank.[2] 'The placing of the effigy of the female under the rice and *man-kachu* plants is suggestive of her being associated with the spirit of vegetation', and 'the sacrifice of pig to the effigy recalls the pig sacrifice in the worship of Mother Goddess.[3] To us it appears as a simple agricultural rite. The crow, the kite and the pig are great enemies of standing crops. Hence in this sacrifice of pig and representation of crows and kites and then to bury them in the small tank may be symbolic of safeguarding the standing crop from these enemies. And it appears more logical that behind pig sacrifice the same sentiments must be working from the very ancient times. The lady with a baby in lap may be taken to represent the plant with corn.[4] In some places of Bengal (in Birbhum) as Mitra informs, on the day following Kālī-*pūjā* a small hut is made of straw and other dry substances and is burnt down. On the last day of Bengali month of *Kārtik* even human effgies of straw are burnt (Account given in *Man in India*, Vol. III) which is known as *bhul* or *bhola*, 'the purport of which is to kill vermin.[5] Mitra thinks that 'this represented a particular form of sacrifice to the Mother Goddess with a view to promote fertility of Crops'[6] and he finds a similarity between Sohorai festival of the Oraons of Chotā Nāgpur and *gay daṇṛ* and takes them to have been borrowed from the Hindus.[7]

HOLĪ :

Holī is another popular festival which may be connected with Mother Goddess worship. It is the gayest of Hindu festivals, celebrated on the day of full moon concluding the lunar month of *Phālgun* (roughly synchronises with March),

---

[1] In Northern India pig is offered to Banasbati Mā, the Mistress of the wood by every passer by; *Man in India*, XXIV, p. 90.

[2] K.P. Mitra (IA. LXI. 1932, p. 232) gets this information from the Bengali Magazine—*Pravasi* of 1330 B.S; also *Man in India*, Vol. XXXII, p. 109.

[3] *IA*, LXI (1932), p. 233. Crook says; the wild pig is pure and 'ceremoniously hunted by Rajputs as represented Gauri Devi the Mother-Goddess in her benign form and the flesh is sacramentally eaten'. *Cf. Religion and Folk-Lore of North India*, p. 367.

[4] It is to be noted that the worship is made exclusively by women. It may be due to the fact, as Bishop Whitehead observes 'that agriculture among primitive races was the business of women rather of men, as it as it is among the savage races of the present day, probably led to the village goddessess being at first worshipped by the women rather than by men; *cf The Village Gods of South India*, p. 150.

[5] *IA*, LXI (1932), p. 235.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

[7] *Ibid.*, LX (1931), p. 189. The date, bathing of cattle, sacrifice to *Go-devata* and pig sacrifice are common.

Gupta has given a detailed description of this festival and has also discussed its special features.[1] He observes that "The Holī is a saturnalia connected with the spring equinox and wheat harvest of the western part of India'.[2] It is connected with Lord Kṛiṣṇa. A.C. Mukherjea remarks[3] that 'it is national All India Pan-Hinduistic festival' and the only 'religious element in the Holī festival is the worship of Kṛishṇa' with 'image of Kṛishṇa as a babe, is placed in a little swing cradle, and decorated with garlands and flowers', the use of *Gulāla* 'by men, women and children is a marked feature of the *Holī* celebrations even in their social aspect', making *Holī* a 'purely secular festival characterised by mere rout and revel'. Hilarity is therefore, the chief characteristic of this festival.[4] This festival, very likely, was associated with agriculture. Just like pre-winter harvest, *gay-dāṇr* was celebrated; it was a pre-summer harvest festival. And agricultural rites are definitely accompanied with licentiousness, debauchery and vulgarity, since such actions are believed to increase fertility. Crooke also holds that the original purpose of the *holī* festival was to promote the fertility of men, animals and crops.[5] In yearly agricultural festival in India and outside India, such licentiousness and relaxation of sex rules is observed. In Raj Mahal Hills, unmarried boys and girls indulge in promiscuous sexual intercourse.[6] Similar feature is observed during the spring festival of the Bhuiyas of Orissa,[7] Kondistan, among wild tribes of Manipur and northern Burma.[8] And the women folk of Assam tribes behave as they like, without any stain, blemish, or loss of reputation'.[9] Debiprasad Chatopadhyaya quotes[10] a spell from the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (Trans. Keith, iv. 2.5.5, p. 315) for agricultural purposes : "Yoke the plough, stretch apart the yokes. Here son in the womb made ready the seed. Through our song be there audience with profit for us. May the ripe (grain) be brought low by the Sickle", and remarks that 'planting the

---

1. Gupte, B.A., *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*, pp, 88-93.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
3. Mukerji, A.C. (Rai Bahadur), *Ancient Indian Fasting and Feasts*, p. 50-56.
4. 'The resurrection of the god was hailed by his disciples as a promise that they too would issue triumphant from the corruption of the grave. On the morrow, the twenty-fifth day of March, which was reckoned as the vernal equinox, the divine resurrection was celebrated with a wild outburst of glee. At Rome, and probably, elesewhere the celebration took the form of a carnival. It was the festival of Joy (Hilaria). A universal licence prevailed. Every man might say and do what he pleased. People, went about the streets in disguise, No dignity was too high or too sacred for humblest citizen to assume with impunity'. *Cf.* Frazer, J.G., *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, p. 227 as quoted in S.K. Dikshit, *The Mother Goddess*, p. 177-78.
5. *Folk lore*, XXV, p. 83 f.
6. Hunter, W.W., ed., *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, London, 1881, Revised edition Oxford, 1907-9, XXII, 68.
7. *Calcutta Review*, CIII, p. 188.
8. Briffault, R., *The Mothers*, III, p. 198-99.
9. Butler, J., *Travels and Adventures in the Provinces of Assam*, London, 1855, p. 10.
10. Chaṭṭopadhya, D., *Lokāyata*, p. 138.

seed is like depositing semen in the female womb.'[1] As I have already mentioned Holi is more or less similar to *gāy-dāṇṛ* festival—a festival of eat, drink and be merry. One point of inquiry still remains to be discussed. On the preceding night *Holī* is burnt on different cross-roads, huge pile of wood, straw and such inflammable things are made and after midnight fire is set to them. Then all assembled there begin singing and dancing—mostly vulgar songs are sung. This ritual also forms a part of the festival which follows. Hilarity is the keynote of this festival at every stage. However, in popular belief burning of *Holikā* is connected with the burning of *Holikā* (sister of Hiraṇyakaśipu, who had a boon by which she was never to be burnt by fire. But when she sat with Prahlāda in her lap, she was burnt and not Prahlāda, and this amounted to the pleasure of all god-fearing people). We may say that this festival began as an agricultural sacrific to ensure good crops and its province extended from the eastern provinces of India to Europe in the west.[2]

Holī is celebrated on the first *Caitra*, the first day of the Hindu year. And in *Holikā dahan* one may expect celebrating the end of the year by burning it and beginning of the year by rejoicing it. Another Hindu calender begins from first *Baisākha* and a similar hilarious festival is celebrated. In north-Bihar *Jūr-śital* is a festival which is celebrated on this day. Hunting of pig is the special feature of this day and also to throw mud and dirt instead of *Gulāla* and coloured water (as in *Holī*).

Holī does not appear to be of vedic origin, since we do not get its mention in the veda. *Śabdakalpadruma*[3] speaks about the obscurity of its origin. It has a licentions and fertility significance no doubt. Vātsyāyana[4] tefers to it. *Ratnāvalī*[5] gives details of this festival. *Mālatimādhava*[6] also refers to it. Alberuni[7] refers to it. So far its connection with *Phālguna* is concerned we get reference in the *Pātālakhaṇḍa* of the *Padma Purāṇa* and the *Utkalkhaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*.

ṢAṢṬHI PŪJĀ

We come across a number of *Ṣaṣṭhī* worship observed throught the year *i.e.*, *Am Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Aśoka Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Campā Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Caprā Ṣaṣṭīh*, *Durgā Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Kapilā Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Khas Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Lotan Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Śitalā Ṣaṣṭhī*[8] etc. Let us here mention *Śitalā Ṣaṣṭhī*

---

1. Chattopadhyaya, D., *op. cit.*, p. 318. *Holi* is a non-vedic festival. Vātśāyana refers to it, *Ratnāvali* give detailed description and so does *Mālatimādhava*. *Cf. Man in India*, VII, p. 144.
2. *Man in India*, Vol. VII (1927), p. 144.
3. *Man in India*, Vol. VII (1927).
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Gupte, B.A., *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*, pp. 6, 12, 19, 26, 42, 97, 102, 143, 224. *Saṣṭhi* Cult has been discussed in Appendix A in detail.

which is worshipped on the sixth day of the month of *Māgha*. This ceremony is of a strictly private character, and is limited to married women who have children. She is worshipped for the protection from small-pox. Ṣaṣṭhī is said to be named because she is a sixth part of the goddess *Prakṛiti*, but she evidently derives her name from the day of the fortnight of which she is a personification.[1]' 'Images of Ṣaṣṭhī are rarely made, but sometimes a small doll represents the goddess, or she is typified by the stone on which condiments are ground'.[2]

D.D. Kosambi[3] refers to some interesting points regarding Mother Goddess. He points out to the mention of a peculiar ritual in the *Mṛichhakatika*, a drama written by Śūdraka; and according to it just finishing his evening prayers, Cārudatta asks his brahmin friend Maitreya to go to offer *bali* to the Mothers at the cross-roads.[4] Bāṇa also mentions such offers given to Mother Goddess but there is no mention to the cross-roads.[5] Keith also gives some information that on cross-roads certain worships were done. According to him, a 'very odd rite is prescribed by the *Mānava* school, for the evening before the last Aṣṭaka at the cross-roads, the sacrificer kills a cow, and dismembers it, and divides the flesh among the passersby.'[6]

MARIAMMĀ

In south India the worship of Mariammā is celebrated with pomp annually. And on such occasions the services of a Bāsavī girl (the daughter of a sonless father dedicated to temple and gods and who raised progeny for her own father) for performing certain paraphernalia like dancing, spitting on the standers by singing the songs in praise of the goddess Mariammā. The significance of their association with the worship of the goddess may be possibly due to the belief that the worship of this popular Goddess—as those of the Divine Mother so largely believed in by the people in Southern India—had its origin in mother-kin.'[7]

MUCKAK RĀNĪ

The Kharwaras of Chota Nagpur every third year celebrate the nuptials of Muchak Rānī (the Earth Mother) in the shape of a small stone painted with red pigment which is brought out of a cave and dressed in wedding garments, carried on a litter to a sacred tree, from where it is conveyed in procession to an adjacent

---

1. *JRAS*, 1946-48, Vol. 9, p. 82.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
3. Kosambi, D.D., *Myth & Reality*, p. 82-84.
4. *Mricchakatika* ; *Kṛito mayā gṛiha devatābhyobalihi*; *gaccha tvamapi chaspathe mātribhya balim uphara*,' I have completed the *bali* (food) offering to the household gods; go, thou offer (this) *bali* to the Mothers and cross-roads'.
5. *Harsacarita* (NSP ed.), p. 223: *Nisasvapi Matri-bali piṇḍasyeva viksu vikṣīpyamāṇasya.*
6. *HOS*, 31-2 (1935), p. 428 .
7. *QJMS*, Vol. III, Oct. 1922. No. 1, p. 476.

hill, the supposed residence of the bridegroom, and there it is thrown into a chasm.[1] This ritual is definitely appears to be connected with fertility—an important characteristic of Mother Goddess. Oraons too celebrate similarly the ritual marriage of the head of their pantheon, Dharmī, the source of life and light, with the Earth Goddess at the *Khaddi* festival held annually in the spring season when the sacred sal-tree begins to blossom.[2] James further informs us that the priest after sacrifice ties a cord round the *Sāl*-tree and thus unite, the Earth Goddess to himself in the capacity of Dharmi and the next day his feet is washed by women at the door of every house and feasting, merry-making, dancing and the singing of obsene songs bring it to an end.[3]

CHAṬHA

The *Chaṭha* festival of Bihar and U.P. can also be connected with the worship of the Mother Goddess. In popular parlance this is called *Chaṭha Māi kī Pūja*. Whether this means the worship of the goddess of Ṣaṣṭhī one can say with certainty. Since it is not Ṣaṣṭhī who is worshipped but the Sun-God—the setting Sun and the rising Sun. On the basis of the worship being done on the 6th day (of the bright half of *Kārtik*) we may connect this festival with the goddess Ṣaṣṭhī. Assutosh Bhattacharya informs that in every month different Ṣaṣṭhīs are worshipped and in *Kārtik* God-Ṣaṣṭhī is worshipped.[4]

KUMĀRĪ PŪJĀ

In the Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa we get the details of Kumārī Pūjā.[5] Virgins, healthy, graceful, beautiful without ulcers and not bastards were selected for this *pūjā*. The *Kumārīs* born of different *varṇas* could be worshipped fordifferent desired objects, though the *kumārīs* born of the Brahmin families could be worshipped in all cases.[6] The worship of *kumārīs* is an important item in *Navrātra Pūjana*.[7] It is further mentioned that the brāhmins should select for worship only the brāhmin *kumārīs*; kshatriya, brāhmin or kṣatriya; Vaiśya; brahmin or kṣatriya or vaiśya and śūdra, *kumārīs* of any of the four *varṇas* (*Devī Bhāgavata*, p. 26.6). The artists and artisans should select the *kumārīs* from their own families and tribes respectively (*Devī Bhāgavata* p. 27.7). The *kumārīs* aged from two years to ten are worshipped during the Navarātra, the number not exceeding nineaccording to the number of of Tithis.[8] These nine virgin girls are named thus respectively: Kumārikā, Trimūrti, Kalyāṇi, Rohiṇī, Kālikā, Caṇḍikā, Śāmbhavī, Durgā and Subhadrā.[1] The number seven of these virgin girls reminds of the seven-mātṛikās, of course, the names differ from that of the mothers.

---

[1] James, E.O., *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, p. 121.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[4] *Indian Culture*, Vol X, pp. 161-67.

[5] III, 27.4, 35.17-18, 89.23.

[6] Kshatriya *Kumari* for victory, vaiśya for money and śūdra for general welfare (*Devī*, p. II. 27.5).

[7] *Devi Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, III. 26.40.

[8] *Ibid.*, III. 26.

Besides these, a number of other festivals too can be mentioned here. The worship of the Goddess Manasā[2], *Ganeśa Caturthī Vrata*[3], Gauri-*pūjā*[4], Tulsī's marriage[5] and *Vaṭa Sāvitrī Vrata*[6] can also be connected with the Mother Goddess worship.

---

1. *Devi Bhagvata Purāṇa*, III. 26.40-43.
2. The worship of Manasā has been dealt under Chapter 8.
3. Gupta, B.A., *op. cit.*, p. 54-58.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 78-83, Chattopadhyaya, D., *Lokāyata*, p. 233-34.
5. Gupta, B.A., *op. cit.*, p. 233-38.
6. *Ibid.*, 246-54.

CHAPTER 11

RESUME

India possesses a long tradition of the Mother Goddess worship. Unlike western countries we do not get any positive evidence with regard to the Mother Goddess worship in the pre-historic India. There is no dearth of material to show that the Mother Goddess worship was prevalent in the Indus Valley period. A large number of antiquities have come down to us as a proof of its existence. She was worshipped not only in human form but also in symbolic form. *Liṅga* and *Yoni* are the symbols of Śiva and Śakti. Many of the stone rings and cylindrical stone pieces discovered from Mohenjodaro have been identified as *Yoni* and *Liṅga* respectively by Marshall. The terracotta figurines and the scene depicted on the seals and sealings clearly show that the Mother Goddess worship was prevalent in the Indus Valley period. To agree with Oppert, the Indus Valley people "believed in the existence of one supreme spirit Heaven, with whom was associated admitted an equal, and eventually even superior share of power, the Goddess of Earth"[1] This Mother Goddess worship must have been fore-runner of the later *Śaktism* which reappears only after the lapse of over a thousand years from the fall of Harappa.[2] The early Aryans, definitely, did not have preference of goddesses over gods.

In the *Ṛigveda* we find gods getting preference over the goddesses were not ignored all together. Uṣas, Rātrī, Rākā, Sinīvātī, Guṅgū, Aditi, Diti, Pṛithivī, Svasti, Pṛśni, Puramdhi, Anumatī, Āpdevis, Sarasvatī, Vāc, Araṇyānī, Indrāṇī, Varuṇānī, Śacī, Rodasī, Sītā, Urvarā, Araṇī Śraddhā, Dhiṣaṇā, Iḷā, Nirṛiti, Sūnṛitā, Śrī, Sūryā etc. are some of the goddesses mentioned in the *Ṛigveda*. A few more goddesses are added to the list in the later vedic literature, while many vanish also. The conception of some of the goddesses also changes. The idea of virginity, fertility, maternity was well established with regard to many of these goddesses. Though Mother Goddess did not get supreme position as she had during the Indus Valley period, the spirit of Mother Goddess worship flows throughout the vedic literature though it crystalised more in the later period. Even during the vedic period several new goddesses came into existence due to the assimilation of local or pre-vedic elements. The *Śakti* of Śiva gradually began to gain popularity

---

1. Oppert, *The Original Inhabitants of India*, p 574.
2. Basham, A.L., *The Wonder that was India*, p. 22.

and emerged as a powerful goddess claiming later on exclusive devotion as the supreme deity from her worshippers.

In the *Sūtra* period, Uṣas, the popular goddess of the early vedic period, went into oblivion but the consorts of Rudra gained prominence. Rudrāṇī, Śarvāṇī, Bhavānī, etc., became popular as Rudra's consorts. Indrāṇī, Varuṇānī, Sītā, Āśā are some of the other goddesses. Hṛī Śrī, Lakṣamī, Puṣṭi, Kālī, Shaṣṭhī, Bhadrakālī and Mahīṣikā are mentioned as goddesses in *Mānava Gṛihya Sūtra* (II.13). *Nagas*, *Yakṣas*, *Apsarās* and Pṛithivī were also worshipped. Rivers like Sarasvatī, Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Dṛiṣadvatī are especially mentioned in the *Sūtras*. As a matter of fact we find the future Hinduism beginning to assume its shape. The gods as well as the goddesses got reverence at the hands of the worshippers. However, an elaborate glorification of a deity has yet to be done and this we find only perfected in the Purāṇic literature. The *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇinī contains the names of some goddesses not mentioned in the Sūtra literature. It is interesting to note that four names of goddess Pārvatī are mentioned in this work viz. Bhavānī, Śarvāṇī, Rudrāṇī, Mṛidānī (Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV. 1.49). The early Pāli literature also throw light on the subject. The mothers of Buddha and Mahavira were divine as they gave birth to divine persons. The Buddhist *Jātakas* mention the popularity of the worship of many goddesses residing in trees. Siri and Kālakanni of the *Sīrikāla Kanni Jātaka* (No. 382) remind us of later Śrī or Lakshmī and Alakshamī. Pṛithvī has also been conceived as goddess in the Pāli līterature. So from time immemorial the Earth maintained her position as a great goddess. Her divinity has an unbroken history. The terracotta figurines and other antiquities discovered from different sites belonging to the post-Indus Valley Period show that the Mother Goddess worship maintained its continuity, though there is no doubt that the early Vedic literature did not maintain the position she had prior to that date. Among the antiquities of this period the goddess in relief from Navadatoli (Maheshwar) and the nude figure on the gold-plaque from Lauriya-Nandangarh are noteworthy. The latter has been identified as the goddess Earth by Bloch reminding us of the goddess Astarte depicted on a similar gold plaque discovered from Syria.

The Mother Goddess worship was reasserting itself in the post-Vedic period and made sufficient grounds during the pre-Mauryan period when the early vedic religion had gone into considerable change, definitely due to the pre-Vedic elements creeping into it. From the Mauryan period we get ample archaeological material for our study, besides literary references. Nudity had been a characteristic feature of the Mother Goddess worship and nude-goddesses appear on the stone discs from Bhir mound (Taxila), Hathial (Taxila) and Kosam. Banerjea finds a comparison between these discs with the pre-historic ringstones on the one hand, and on the other with the *cakras*, the *Yantras* of the *Śāktas*, *Viṣṇnpaṭṭas* of the Vaiṣṇavas and *ayāgapaṭas* of the Jainas, and further observes that "their ideological association with the former, *viz.*, the chakras and the Yantras of the later day Śākta cult, appears to be closer" (*Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 170). The *Yakṣa-Yakṣini* cult was fairly popular during this period as we find its depiction not only in the sculptural reliefs at Bharhut, Bodha Gayā and Sānchī but also in some independent images like that of Didarganj Yakṣinī. *Yakṣinī* may be a type of female fertility figure and the Yaksinī cult prevailed in the Mauryan period. The female figurines standing on lotus pedestal depicted on a terracotta plaque from Basarh may be a fore-runner of goddess Lakṣmī. The figure of a goddess discovered from Ghantasala in Andhra Pradesh belonging to 3rd Cent. B.C. may be of Sarasvatī. During the Mauryan period, South India was definitely the seat of Śakti worship as Megasthenes informs us. The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea also supports this. In Kautilya's Arthaśāstra, goddesses like Aparājitā, Śrī, and Madirā have been mentioned. Aparājitā stands for Durgā and Madirā may be Varuṇānī as that is one of her names. Dr. S. Chattopadhyaya rightly points out that there were three distincts types of *Śākta* sects in India : (a) in the north-western part conceived as Mother Goddess united with a Father-God, (b) in the eastern part where emphasis was laid on the Yantras or magic diagrams, (c) and in the south where she was conceived as the virgin goddess.

The archaeological materials belonging to the Śuṅga-Kuṣāṇa period (sculptured reliefs from Bharhut, Sānchī, Bodh-Gayā, Amarāvatī, Mathurā and Gandhāra, large number of terracotta pieces and coins) throw considerable light on the worship of the Mother Goddess. It appears that the *Yakśa-Yakṣinī* cult continued to dominate the folk beliefs, but at the same time Hindu religion of the later period was taking its shape and very truly we can call this period as a formative one. While on the one hand Buddhism was making its impact, the foreign invasion also brought a great change in the conception of gods and goddesses. Since there was foreign contact we cannot rule out the influence of foreign religious beliefs on our own. However, it is very difficult to sort out foreign elements from our religious belief.

There is no doubt that all the principal goddesses had begun to take its final form and their representations can be found in the vast archaeological materials of this period. Śrī-Lakṣmī in its different forms is represented in sculptured reliefs and on seals and sealings. During this period Gaja-Lakṣmī conception got prominence and it continued to hold its position. Sarasvati is another goddess represented in this period. She appears on a railing pillar of Bharhut playing on a harp. From Mathurā her figure has been discovered in which she is holding manuscript as her emblem. Umā (Siva's consort) also got her representation on Kuṣāṇa coins. However, it appears that Śiva's consort Durgā, who emerged as the most popular goddess than Lakṣmī during this period. But the amalgamated form of Śiva and Śakti, the ardhanārīśvara, got its representation during this period. Perhaps the great Goddess had yet to outshine her husband Śiva.

Besides, Gaṅgā was also represented if the *Makara-Vāhinī* figure of the Bharhut reliefs be identified as such. No doubt, an Indian goddess *Māyā* is referred to in the *Saundarānanda* of Aśvaghoṣa connected with floods in the Ganges. The Nāga-

Nāginī cult was also popular during this period. Folk-goddess like Hārītī got her representation as early as this period.

The Gupta period presents before us a well developed Mother Goddess cult for the study of which we have no dearth of either literary or archaeological materials. On the one hand we have the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* which reflect the final form of Hinduism continuing even today and on the other cult images in abundance. It appears that with the conception of the Hindu Trinity the cult of *Śakti* also reached its maturity. The consorts of all the three members of Hindu Trinity—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva emerged as deities of definite cults and their images have been found in plenty belonging to this period. Besides, images of a number of minor goddesses including Śapta-Mātṛikās have been found. All these show that Śakti worship or Mother Goddess worship remain popular in the Gupta age and after. But we have to remember that it was the consort of Śiva who was finally conceived as an all powerful Mother Goddess. The best exposition of it can be found in the *Devī-Mahātmya* of the *Mārkaṇdeya Purāṇa.*

The archaeological materials help us in assessing the actual position of the Mother Goddess worship. Since the consort of Śiva became the chief deity of a Hindu Sect, the Śāktas, it is necessary to assess the relation of Śiva with his con~~cert~~ sort and we find them represented in art. We get a number of Mother and child figures which show the Mother aspect of the goddess. We may say it as one of the stages of Śiva-Śakti relationship; here Śiva is purely dependent on the Great Mother (Sadyojāta conception). In the second stage we find both of them given independent status which necessitated their regular marriage (Hara-Gaurī images and Kalyāṇa-Suṅdara images). The third stage is the amalgamation of Śiva and Pārvatī (or *Śakti*) cults. The Mother and Child figure has a long antiquity; its origin can be traced to the period when the famale or the Mother was the sole creator and the role of male in creation was not recognised. The second stage, the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, is to recognise both of them as equal pastner and the Ardhanārīśvara especially signifies the fusion of the two to make a composite cult. We get a large number of images representing all these three aspects of Śiva-*Śakti* cult. In the Ardhanārīśvara figure we find a definite attempt for making a compromise between the Śiva and the *Śakti* cults.

In the Gupta and the subsequent periods Durgā emerged as a very powerful and popular goddess particularly in northern India. In the *Purāṇas* she has been conceived as the Great Mother Goddess, the supreme creatrix and the best exposition of this idea can be found in the *Mārkṇdeya Purāṇa* (*Devī Mahtāmya* section). Identified as the consort of Siva, she is, at the same time, the unified resplendent lustur~~e~~ coming from all the gods and equipped with their weapons thus born to kill Mahiṣāsura. So Mahiṣāsura mardinī form of Durgā became most popular from fourth century A.D. and continues so even today. J. N. Banerjea traces its antiquity even from the Indus Valley Period (*Development of Hindu Inconography*, p. 165).

Śrī-Lakṣmī had a definite cult of her own long before the Gupta period. The cult of Lakṣmī, however, got matured only during the post-Kuṣāṇa period. The Purāṇas, the epics and the literature, besides sculptures, help us a good deal in assessing the position of her worship. The Gaja-Lakṣmī coneption of the earlier period continued to be represented. She, however, never attained the independent status as we find in the case of Śiva's consort.

Sarasvatī, an important river goddess in the early vedic period, became the spouse of Brahmā later on, as we find her position in the Purāṇas. She got represented in art in the Śuṅga period. Her popularity was such that she was adopted also in the Buddhism and the Vaiṣṇavism. The *Purāṇas* even furnish the details of her iconographic features. We get the inconographic representations of Sarasvatī in abundance in the Gupta period. Her representations continued to be popular in the mediaeval period.

The represedtation of the seven-Mothers are numerous in the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods. The worship of Sapta-Mātṛikā perhaps began as early as the Indus Valley period. However, the Sapta-Mātṛikā conception takes its final form in the Purāṇic period. The Purāṇas as well as the Epics furnish enough material. It appears that the Sapta-Mātṛika conception of the *Śāktas* got wide popularity in the medieval period. The Śaktis of many gods were put together and many local and tribal goddesses were also accomodated.

While Sarasvatī was the river goddess of the early Āryans, Gaṅgā and Yamunā dominated as great goddesses the religious life of the Hindus during the Gupta and the post-Gupta period, particularly in northern India. They still maintain their position. The *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* throw light on their sacredness and their worship. In art, they were represented on their respective *vāhanas*, *makara* and tortoise. In the early Gupta period the images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā appear as guardian deities, but later on Gaṅgā attained independent status as a goddess whereas Yamunā could not attain such popularity. Independent images of Gaṅgā belonging to the medieval period have been discovered.

The *Nāga* cult also got its perfection in the early Gupta period, no doubt representation of Nāgas has been found in earlier period also but we are not sure about their having represented a particular cult. The *Epics* on the other hand refer to *Nāga* worship. It occupied a very prominent place in the Indian folk-lore.

By the 5th Century A.D. the Goddess cult reached its maturity and in the form of *Śakti-Devī* her conception is preserved in the *Purāṇic* literature, thus establishing the superiority of feminine over the masculine. A new feature developed in the worship of Mother Goddess known as the *Tāntric* worship, though its germ can he found right from the pre-historic times and *tāntricism* can be traced in the *Vedic* the *Brāhmaṇic* and the *Purāṇic* literature. It has been argued by some scholars that it came from China whereas others believe that the Hindus borrowed it from the *Mahāyāna* Buddisim. While the Hindus developed the *Śiva-Śakti* conception, in Buddisim, *Prajñā* and *Upāya* (or *Śūnyatā* and *Karuṇā*) dominated.

However, Motherhood of God is emphasited by the *Tantras*. The *Tantras* glorify *Śakti*. The Buddhist *Tantras* is the development of the *Yogācāra* and was inspired by the *Śūnyavāda* or the *Mādhyamikas* and as such *Vajrayāna* is an advancement of the *Yogācāra* thought. An important feature of the *tantric* from the worship is *Cakradūjā* and *Pañcatattva*. This shows that *tantric* religion is associated with mystic rituals. A large number of goddess belonging to Hinduism and Buddhism having *tāntric* affliation have been discovered belonging to the medieval period. These are Kālī, Kāmākhyā, Vasali, Nīla or Nīla Sarsvatī or Tārā, Bheruṇḍa, Mahādurgā, Ivaritā Chhinnamastā, Mātaṅgī, Bhūbneśvarī, Bhairavī, Dhūmavatī, Vagalā, Kamalā, Aparājitā, Mahiṣamardinī, Gaurī, Nairātmā, Ekajaṭā, Jaṅgulī, Parṇaśavarī, Mārichī, Soḍalakṣmī, Uṣṇiṣavijaya etc. Among these Tārā Kālī, Mahiṣamardinī, Aparājitā etc. had wide popularity. Tāntricism almost began to be popular in about 6th Century A.D. and most of the goddesses of Hinduism or Buddhism came to be associated with Tāntric form of worship.

It had been our submission that local elements got assimilated or absorbed into the growing orthodox cults but at the same time many could retain their individuality. Among such folk-goddesses either Hindu or Buddhist Hārītī, Manasā, Ṣaṣṭhī, Jyeṣṭhā etc. who still occupy an important place in the religious belief of the people. Hārītī is associated with the Magadha and she might have something to do with child welfare. The story of ogress Jarā has been given in the *Mahābhārata* and she has been associated with children. J.N. Banerjea establishes ideological identity between Jarā and Hārītī was popular with the Hindus as well as the Bundhists. She was a folk-goddess of northern India, her popularity extended from Bengal to Punjab. Her earliest representation belongs to the Kuṣāṇa period and in the madieval period her cult had wide prevalence and popularity. Manasā is another folk-goddess who enjoyed popularity more particularly in eastern India. Ṣaṣthī was also a popular folk-goddess of eartern India. On the other hand, Jyeṣṭhā belonged to South India, her worship being as old as *Baudhāyana Gṛihya Sūtra*. She was affiliated to Vaiṣṇavism later on.

In the process of evolution of the Mother Goddess cult, a number of places came to be associated with the *Sakti* worship and they are known as the *Śākta pīṭhas*. They are essentially the *Śākta* pilgrimages. The number of these *pitaas* or *tirthas* also went on increasing. In the later phase these *pīṭhas* became associated with some goddess. (*Matsya Purāṇa* give a list of 108 such *tīrṭhas*) but originally these must have been places associated with aniconic worship. In the *Mahābhārata* only three *Śākta-yīṭhas* have been mentioned associated with *Yoni* and *Sthana* of *Śakti*. The *Purāṇas* give an account of the origin of these *Śākta-pīṭhas* according to which these are connected with some piece of the limbs of Satī and where Śiva in the form of Bhairavas settled to keep watch over those pieces. The story also supports the view that the *Śākta-pithas* are originally places associated with aniconic worship. These Pīthas went on increaasing with the process of absorption of the local goddesses and in the final form these became *Śākta tirthas*, being the seat of some goddess.

Several festivals and rituals are exclusively associated with the Mother Goddess worship such as Sarasvatī-pujā (on the fifith day of *Māgha*), Durgā *pujā* (in the bright half of *Āśvin*), Kālī-*puja* (very popular in Bengal), *Gāy-dāṇr*, *Holī*, *Chaṭha*, Manasā-*pujā*, *Vaṭa-Sāvitri Vrata*, Gauri-*pūja*, *Nāga-pañchamī*, Kumari-*pūjā*, *etc*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agrawala, V.S. —*Sparks from the Vedic Fire*, Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 1962.

Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (Ek Sānskritik Adhyayana), Hindustani Academy Allahabad, 1961.

Devī—Māhātmyam, The Glorification of the Great Goddess, Varanasi, 1963.

A Catalogue of the Brahmanical Images in Mathura Art, U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow, 1951.

India as known to Pāṇini, University of Lucknow, 1953.

A Handbook of the Sculptures in the Curzon Museum of Archaeology, Muttra, Allahabad, 1939.

Gupta Art, U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow, 1948.

Aitareya Brāhmaṇa —Translated by A.B. Keith, HOS, XXV, 1920.

Allan, J. —*Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India (in the British Museum)*, London, 1936.

Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Sasāṅka, King of Gauḍa (in the British Museum), London, 1914.

Altekar, A.S. —*Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard*, Bombay, 1954.

The Coinage of the Gupta Empire, Bombay, 1954.

Amara —*Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana*, with commentary of Bhattaksiraswamin, Ed. by H.D. Sharma and N.G. Saradesai, Poona, 1941.

Atharvaveda —Ed. by Sripada Sarma, Aundha Nagar, Bombay, 1940.

Avalon, A. —*Hymns to the Goddess* (Translated from Sanskrit), Luzac & Co., London, 1913.

Tantrik Texts, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1937.

Principles of Tantra, Ganesh & Co., (Madras) Ltd., Madras, 1952.

Bachhofer, L. —*Early Indian Sculpture*, Vol. I, Paris, MCMXXIX.

Bader, Clarisse —*Women in Ancient India*, London, 1925.

Bagchi, P.C. —*Studies in the Tantras*, Part I, University of Calcutta, 1939.

Bhāgvatgita —Gitā Press, Gorakhpur, Sambaṭ 2014.

Bāṇabhaṭṭa —*Caṇḍī Śataka.*

Harṣacarita Eng. Trans. by E.B. Cowell & F.W. Thomas, London, 1897.

Kādambarī. Eng. Trans. by C.M. Ridding, London, 1896.

Banerjea, J.N. —*The Development of Hindu Iconography*, University of Calcutta, 1956 (2nd Edition).

Religion in Art and Archaeology, University of Lucknow, 1968.

Barnett, L.D. —*Hindu Gods and Heroes*, London 1922.

Barth, A. —*The Religions of India*, London, 1882.

Barua, B.M. & Sinha, K.G —*Bhārhut Inscriptions*, University of Calcutta, 1926.

Basham, A.L. —*The Wonder that was India*, London, 1954.

Beal, S. —*Si-yu-ki*, Buddhist Records of the Western World (2nd Vol), London, 1906.

Bhandarkar, R.G. —*Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Collected Works of Sir R.G. Bhandarkar, Vol. IV, Ed. by N.B. Utgikar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1929.

Bhattacharya, B.T. —*Sādhanamālā*, Gaekwad Oriental Services, Vol. XLI, Baroda, 1928.

The Indian Buddhist Iconography, 2nd. Edn., Calcutta, 1958.

Bhattacharya, B.C. —*Indian Images*, Calcutta & Simla, 1921.

Jaina Iconography, Lahore, 1939.

Bhattacharya, H. —*The Foundations of Living Faiths*, University of Calcutta, 1938.

Bhattacharya, N.N. —*History of the Sākta Religion*, Munshiram Manohar Lal Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1974.

Indian Mother Goddesses, Calcutta, Indian Studies, 1971.

Bhattasali, N.K. —*Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca, 1929.

Bloomfield, M. —*The Religion of the Veda*, The Knickerbocker Press, 1908.

A Vedic Concordance, Harvard University, 1906.

Bose, D.N. —*Tantras their philosophy and Occult Secret*, Calcutta.

Briffault, Robert —*The Mothers* (3 Vols), 1st Edn. London and New York, 1917.

Butler, J. —*Travels and Adventures in the Provinces of Assam*, London, 1855.

Campbell, Joseph —*The Masks of God*, Vol. I & II, London, 1960.

Chakravarty. C. —*The Tantras—Studies on their Religion and Literature*, Calcutta, 1963.

Chanda. R.P. —*The Indo Aryan Races*, Part I, Varendra Research Society, 1906.

Chattopadhyaya, D.P. —*Lokāyata*, Peoples Publishing House, 1959.

Chattopadhyaya, S. —*The Evolution of Theistic Sects in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1962.

Evolution of Hindu Sects : upto the time of Sankaracharya, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1970.

Childe, V. Gordon —*The Aryans*, London, 1926.

Codrington, K. de B. —*Ān Introduction to the Study of Mediaeval Indian Sculpture*, London, 1929.

Coomaraswamy, A.K. —*History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, London, 1927.

Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Vol. IV, 1927.

La Sculpture de Bodhagava, Paris, 1935.

Yakṣas (2 Vols), Washington, 1923, 31.

The Transformation of Nature in Art, Harvard University Press, 1934.

Catalogue of the Indian Collections in the Museum of the Fine Arts, Boston, Part II, 1927.

Coon, Carleton, S. —*The History of Man*, London, 1955.

Cousens, H. —*Chalukyan Architecture of the Canarese Districts*, Calcutta, 1926.

Cowell, E.B. —*The Jātaka* (7 Vols. with Index), Cambridge, 1895-1907.

Crooke, W. —*An Introduction of Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, Allahabad, 1894.

Cunningham, A. —*The Stūpa of Bhārhut*, London, 1879.

Mahābodhi, London 1892.

Das, A.C. —*Ṛigvedic Culture*, Calcutta and Madras, 1925.

Das, S.K. —*Śakti or Divine Power*, University of Calcutta, 1934.

Dasgupta, S.B. —*An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, University of Calcutta, 1950.

Dey, Nandolal, —*Rasātala, the Under World*, Calcutta, 1924.

Dharma Sūtra,
Āpastamba
Baudhāyana
Gautama
Vaśiṣṭha
—Translated by G. Buhler in the *Sacred Books of the East*, Vols. II & XIV.

Dikshit, S.K. —*The Mother-Goddess*, Poona.

Dikshitar, V.R.R. —*The Purāṇa Index* (3 Volumes), University of Madras, 1951-55.

Dowson, J. —*A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography History and Literature*, 7th Edn. London, 1950.

Dutta, K. Guru —*Hindu Culture*, 3rd Edn., Bombay, 1951.

Ehrenfel, B. —*Mother-Right in India*, Oxford University Press 1941.

Eliot, C. —*Hinduism & Buddhism* (3 Vols.), London, 1954.

Evans, A. —*The Palace of Minos*, London, 1922-37.

Tree & Pillar Cult, London, 1904.

Farnell, L.R. —*Greece and Babylon*, 1911.

Fausboll, V. —*Indian Mythology*, London, 1902.

Fergusson, J. —*Tree and Serpent Worship in Ancient India*, (2nd Edn.), London, 1873.

Fleet, J.F. —*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1888.

Foote, Bruce —*Collection of the Indian Pre-historic and Proto-historic Antiquities*, Madras, 1916.

Foucher, A. —*The Beginnings of Buddhist Art in India and Central Asia*, Paris and London, 1917.

Frankfort, H. —*The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, 4th Impression, Chicago, 1957.

Kingship and the Gods, 3rd Impression, Chicago, 1958.

Frazer, J. —*The Golden Bough*, Abridged Edition, London, 1949.

Fuchs, Stephen —*The Origin of Man and his Culture*.

Getty, Alice —*The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Oxford, 1914.

Holts, G. —*Aegean Civilization*, 1925.

Gode, P.K. & Karve *Apte's The Practical Sanskrit—English Dictionary*, (3 Vols) Poona, 1957-59.

Gonda, J. —*Aspects of Early Vaiṣṇavism*, Utrecht, 1954.

Gangoly, O.C. —*Indian Terracotta Art*, Calcutta, Allahabad, Bombay, 1959.

The Earth-Goddess in Buddhist Art, *Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XIX, March 1943, No. 1.

The Art of the Pallavas, Allahabad, Calcutta, Bombay, 1957.

Ganguli, M.M. —*Orissa and Her Remains*, Calcutta, 1912.

Goswami, A. —*Indian Temple Sculpture*, Calcutta, 1956.

Goswami, Kunja Govind —*A Study of Vaiṣṇavism*, Calcutta, 1956.

Griffith, Ralph. T.H. —*The Hymns of the Ṛigveda* (2 Vols) Benaras, 1920 & 26.

The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda (2 Vols), Benaras, 1916 & 1917.

Gṛihya Sūtra, Āgniveśya Ed. by L.R. Ravi Verman, Trivandrum, 1940.

Aśvalāyana with Narayana's Commentary by V.S.S. Ranade in An S.S. Poona, 1936—SBE. XXIX Oxford, 1886.

Gobhila : with Commentary of Bhattanarayans; Ed. by Chintamani Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1936.

Khādira : Edited by A. Mahadeva Sastri and Srinivasacharya, Published in Govt. Oriental Library Series, Mysore, 1913—*SBE.* XXIX, Oxford, 1886.

Kāthaka : Ed. by T.R. Chintamani, Madras, 1944.

Grunwedel, A. —*The Buddhist Art in India*, London, 1901.

Gupte, B.A. —*Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*, Calcutta and Simla, 1919.

Halayudha —*Abhidhānuratna-mālā*, Ed. by The Aufrecht, London, 1861.

Hall, H.R. —*The Ancient History of the Near East*, 11th Edition, 1950 (Reprinted last in 1960).

Hopkins, E. Washburn —*Epic Mythology*, Strassburg, 1915.

The Religions of India, Boston, 1895.

Harivaṁśa —Translated by M.N. Dutta, Calcutta, 1897.

Harle, J.C. —*Gupta Sculpture*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974.

Hastings, J. (Edited by) —*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, (12 Vols), Third Impression, 1955.

Havell, E.B. —*Ideals of Indian Art* London, 1911.

The Himalayas in India Art, London, 1924.

Hume, R.A. —*The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, Oxford, 1921.

Iśvarakṛiṣṇa —*Sāṅkhya—Kārikā*, Eng. Trans. by Th. Colebrooke, London, 1937.

Jacobi, H. —*The Rāmāyaṇa*, (Das Ramayana Translated by S.N. Ghoshal), Baroda, 1960.

James, E.O. —*The Beginnings of Religion*, London.

The Cult of the Mother-Goddess, London, 1959.

Prehistoric Religion, London, 1957.

History of Religions, New York, 1957.

The Ancient Gods, London, 1960.

Jash, P.N. —*History of Saivism*, Roy and Chaudhary, Calcutta, 1974.

Kala, S.C. —*Sculptures in the Allahabad Municipal Museum*, Allahabad, 1946.

Kalhaṇa —*Rājataraṅginī*, trans. by M.A. Stein, 2 Vols., London, 1900.

Kālidāsa —*Abhijñaṇa Śākuṅtalaṁ*, Ed. M. Williams, 2nd Ed., Oxford, 1876.

Kumāra Saṁbḥava, Ed. A.F. Stenzler, London, 1838.

Raghuvaṁśam, Ed. with English translation by G.R. Nandargikar, Bombay, 1897.

Kapadia, K.M. —*Hindu Kinship*, Bombay, 1947.

Kanśika Sūtra —(Of the Athervaveda) Ed. M. Bloomfield, in *JAOS*, Vol. XIV. New Haven, 1890.

Kauṭilya —*Arthaśāstra*, Ed. and Trans. by R. Shamasastry, Mysore, 1956 (5th Edn).

Keith, A.B. —*The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda, and Upanishads*, (Harvard Oriental Series Nos. 31 & 32), London, 1925.

Keith A.B. & Carnoy, A.J. —*The Mythology of All Races*, Vol. VI, Boston, 1917.

Kenyon, K.M. —*Digging up Jericho*, London 1957.

Kosambi, D.D. —*Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962.

An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, Bombay, 1956.

Kramer —*Sumerian Mythology*, London, 1944.

Karmrisch, Stella —*Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, 1933.

Pala and Sena Sculpture, Reprint from Rupam No.40, Oct. 1929.

Kuhn, Herbert —*On the Track of Pre-historic Man*, Translated by A.H. Brodrick, London, 1955.

Kumarappa, B. —*The Hindu Conception of the Deity*, London, 1934.

Langdon. —*Tammuz and Ishtar*, Oxford, 1914.

Lohuizen, De Leeuw —*The Scythian Period*, Leiden, 1949.

Macdonell, A & Keith A.B. —*Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (2 Vols), Motilal Banarsi Das, Varanasi, 1958.

Macdonell, A.A. —*The Vedic Mythology*, Varanasi, 1963.

Mackenzie, D.A. —*Egyptian Myth aud Legend*, London.

Indian Myth and Legend, London.

Myths of Babylonia and Assyria, London.

Myths of Crete and Pre-Hellenic Europe, London.

Macfie, J.M. —*Myths and Legends of India*, Edinburg, 1924.

Mackay, E. —*Early Indus Civilization*, Boston, 1943.

Further Excavations at Mohenjo-daro (Vols. I & II), London, 1937.

Mahābhārata —Chitrashala Press Edition.

Eng. Trans. M.N. Dutta, Calcutta.

Also P.C Roy Edition.

Mahāvastu —Ed. by E. Senart, Paris, 1887-97.

Majumdar, R.C. —The History and Culture of the Indian People.

Vol. I—The Vedic Age, London, 1950.

Vol. II—The Age of Imperial Unity.

Vol. III—The Classical Age.

Vol. IV.—The Age of Imperial Kanauj.

Vol. V—The Struggle for Empire.

The History of Bengal, Vol. I, Dacca University, 1943.

Majumdar, R.C. & Madhavananda Swami —*Great Women of India*, Advaita Ashrama, 1953.

Marshall, J. —*Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, (in 3 Vols), London, 1931.

Marshall, J. & Foucher, A. —*The Monuments of Sāñchī*, (3 Vols), Calcutta, 1940.

Max Müller, F. —*The Vedas*, Calcutta, 1956.

Mehta, R.L. —*Pre-Buddhist India*, Bombay, 1939.

Milindapañho —Translated by Rhys Davids, *SBE* XXXV-XXXVI, Oxford, 1890-94.

Mishra, J. —*Bhārtiya Pratīka Vidyā* (in Hindu), Bihar Rastrabhasa Parisad, Patna 1959.

Mode, Heinz. —*The Harappa Culture and the West*, Calcutta, 1961.

The Women in India Art, tr. from the German by Marianne Herzfedt rev. by D. Talbot Rice, Allied Publications, New Delhi, 1972.

Monur-William —*Brāhmaṇism and Himduism or Religious Thought and Life in India*, London, 1891.

Indian Wisdom, London, 1875.

Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford, 1899.

Muir, J. —*Original Sanskrit Texts* (5 Vols), London, 1860-71.

Mukerji, A.C. —*Ancient Indian Fasts and Feasts*, Macmillan & Co., 1932.

Nandi, R.N. —*Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan: AD 600-1000*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1973.

Neumann, Erich —*The Great Mother*, London, 1955.

Oppert, Gustav —*On the Original Inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa or India*, 1893.

Panigrahi, K.C. —*Archaeological Remains at Bhubneswara* Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1961.

Pāṇini —*Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Ed. T. Goldstucker, Allahabad, 1914.

Patañjali —*Mahābhāṣya*, Ed. Kielhorva, Bombay, 1906.

Patil, D.R. —*The Monuments of the Udayagiri Hill*, Gwalior, 1948.

Payne, Earnest A. —*The Śāktas*, Calcutta, 1933.

Piggot, Stuart —*Pre-historic India*, Penguin Books, 1961.

Purāṇa, Agni —Poona, 1900.

Bhāgavata Bombay, 1920; Eng. Trans. by Swami Vijnanananda, Allahabad, 1921-23.

Brahma	Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, Poona, 1895.
Brahamāṇḍa	Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1923.
Brahmavaivarta	Gurumandala Granthamala Series, Calcutta, 1955.
Devī Bhāgavata	Sri Vekatesvara Stream Press, Bombay, Sam, 1829—Benaras Edition.
Mārkaṇḍeya	Calcutta, 1862, Eng. Trans. by F.E. Pargiter, Calcutta 1904; Trans. by M.N. Dutta, Calcutta, 1857.
Matsya	Allahabad, 1916-17.
Padma	Ed. by M.C. Apte, Anandasrama Press, Poona, 1893.
Śiva Mahā	Ed. and Trans. by Sarma.
Skandā	Venkatesvara Press, Bombay. 1910.
Vāmana	Venkatesvara Press.
Visṇu	Bombay, 1889.
Vayu.	(2 Vols), Calcutta, 1880-88.
Radhakrishnan, S.	—*Indian Philosophy* (Vols. I & II), London, 1962 (7th Impression).
	The Bhāgvadgita, London, 1960, (6th Impression).
	Religion and Society, 1947.
Ram Gopal	—*India of Vedic Kalpa Sūtras*, Delhi, 1959.
Rao, T.A. Gopinath	—*Elements of Hindu Iconography*, (2 Vols.), Madras, 1914 & 1916.
Ray, Ramkumar (Edited by)	—*Mahābhārata Kośh*, The Chow Khamba Sanskrit Series Work No. 98.
Ray, Sudhanshu K.	—*The Ritual Art of the Bratas of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1961.
Renou, Louis	—*Religions of Ancient India*, University of London, 1953.
Ṛigveda	—Sripada Sarma, Aundha Nagar, Bombay, 1940.
Saletore, R.N.	—*Life in Gupta Age*, Bombay, 1943.
Sankalia, H.D.	—*The Archeology cf Gujerat*, Bombay, 1941.
Sankalia H.D. & Deo	—*From History to Pre-history at Navasa (1954-56)*, Poona, 1960.
	Excavations at Maheshwar and Navadatoli (1952-53), Poona.

Sankarananda, Swami —*Rigvedic Culture of the Pre-historic Indus, Vol. I (2nd Ed.)* Calcutta, 1946.

x Sarasvati, S.K. —*A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, 1957.

Śatapatha Brāṇmaṇa —Translated by J. Eggling (5 Volumes), *SBE* XII,XXVI, XLI, XLIII & XLIV, Oxford, 1882-1900, ed. A. Weber, London, 1885.

Schoff, W.H. —*She Periplus of the Erythaean Sea*, 1912.

Sierksma, F. —*The Gods we shape them*, London, 1960.

Singh, S.B. —*Brahmanical Icons in Northern India*, Sagar Publications, New Delhi, 1977.

Sinha, B.P. —*Bhārtiya Kala ko Bihār ki Dena*, Patna, 1958.

Sirkar, D.C. —*The Śākta Pīthas* (Reprint from JASB., Letters, Vol. XIV No. 1, 1948.

Sirkar, D.C. (Edited by) —*The Śākti cult and Tārā*. University of Calcutta, 1967.

Sivarammurti, C. —Parallels and Opposites in Indian Iconography, JRAS, letters, Vol. XXI, No. 2,1955; *Gaṅgā*, Orient Longman Limited, New Delhi, 1976.

Sivarammurti, C. —*Bulletin, Madras Government Museum*, New Series IV.

Smith, V.A. —*A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, Oxford, 1930.

Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1906.

Stenkonow & Poultuxe —*The Religions of India* Copenhagen, 1949.

Śūdraka —*Mṛicchhakaṭika*, Ed. V.G. Pranjape, Poona, 1937.

R.D. Karmarkar, Poona, 1937.

Takakusu —*A Record of the Bhuddist Religion by I—tsing*, Oxford, 1896.

Taittirīya Āranyaka —Anandasrama Sankrita Series, No. 36, Poona, 1927.

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa —Calcutta, 1855-70.

Upadhyaya, B.S. —*India in Kālidāsa*, Allahabad, 1947.

Upaniṣad, Brihaparanyaka —Translated by Max Muller in the *Sacred Books of the East* Vol. I & XV.
Chhāndogya,
Kaṭha
Keṇa
Śvetasvatra
Taittiriya

Vālmīki —*Rāmāyaṇa*, Lahore, 1938, Ed. and Translated by Janaki Das Sharma (2 Vols), Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Sam. 2017.

Vājasnevī Saṁhitā —London, 1882.

Van Buren, E. Douglas —*Clay Figurines of Babylonia and Assyria*, London, 1930.

Varahamihira —*Brihat-Saṁhitā*, Ed. by H. Kern, Calcutta, 1865.

Vats, M.S. —*Excavations at Harappa*, (1920-21, 1933-34), Calcutta, 1940.

Verma, B.S. —*Socio-Religious, Economic and Literary Conditions of Bihar*, 1962.

Viṣṇudharmottara —Translation of B.K. III. A Treatise on Indian Painting and Image Making by Stella Kramriseh, 2nd Edition, Calcutta, 1928.

Vogel J.Ph. —*Indian Serpent-Lore or The Nagas in Hindu Legend and Art*, London, 1956.

Antiquities of Chamba State, Calcutta, 1911.

Watters – *On Yuang Travels in India*. (2 Vols.), Edited by T.W. Rhys Davids & S.W. Bushell.

Weber, Max. —*The Religion of India*, Illiois, 1958.

Whitehead, R.B. —*Catalogue of Coins in The Punjab Museum*, Oxford, 1914.

Wilkins, W.J. —*Hindu Mythology* (Vedic and Puranic), Calcutta, 1882.

Wilson, H.H. —*The Vishnu Purāṇa*, London, 1840.

Woodroffe, Sir J. —*Ṣhakti and Shākta*, Madras, 1929.

Simmer, Heinrich —*Myths and Symbols in Indian Civilization*, (Edited by Joseph Campbell), The Bollingen Series, VI, Patheon Books, 1947.

Journals :

Ancient India—Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India

Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona

Annual Reports of the Varendra Research Society

Archaeological Survey of India (*Annual Reports*)

Archaeological Survey of India (*Cunningham's Reports*)

Archaeological Survey of India (*New Imperial Series*)

Antiquity

Bhartīya Vidyā

Bulletin of the Baroda Museum

Bulletin of the Deccan Research Institute, Poona

Calcutta Review

Epigraphia Indica

Folk-Lore

G.D. College, Bulletin

Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies

Imperial Gazetteer of India

Indian Antiquary

Indian Culture

Indian Archeology—A Review

Indian Historical Quarterly

Journal of the Andhra Historical Society

Journals of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta

Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Patna

Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay

Journal of the Department of Letters, Calcutta

Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute, Allahabad

Journal of the Indian History Congress

Jonrnal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta

Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Bombay

Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London

Journal of the U.P. Historical Society, Lucknow

Lalita Kala, New Delhi

Man, London

Man-in-India

Mārg.

Memoirs of Archeological Survey of India

Primitive Man

Proceedings and Translations of All India Oriental Conference

Purāṇa, Vārānasī

Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society

Rupam

Siddha—Bhārtī

INDEX

A

Abhijñaña Śākuntalam 7 (fn)
Abhisek-Laksmī 77
A.C. Das 36
A.C. Mukherjea 192
Acharya 6
Acyutaraya temple 127
Adhyātmā Ramayaṇa 95, 115, 116
Adhipatni 51
Aditi 33, 35, 38-43, 47, 61, 94, 96, 98, 173
Ādityā 35, 40, 50, 60
Adi Parva 119
Ādityahṛdaya 116
Ādityasena 132
Ādiśukti Mahāmāyā 107
Ādyakāli stotra 164
Ādya-Śakti 183
Ādpāśakti 6, 97
Aegean 17, 20, 23, 53
Africa 150 (fn)
Āgamas 138
Agastya 116
Agathocles 79
Aghnyā 59
Agnāyī 56-58
Agnevī 115
Agni 35, 41, 44, 55, 56, 58, 60
Agni-Durga 117
Agni-*purāṇa* 126, 133
Agni-Tirtḥa 133
Ahanānura 83
Ahichchhatra 112
Aihole 149
Aindrī 56
Ain-i-Akbari 189
Air God 18
Air-Godshu 25 (fn)
Aitareya Brāhmana 9, 46
Aiyai 82
Aiyai Kumārī 83
Aiyāni 83
Ajanta 100, 149
Ajayagarh 172
A.K. Coomaraswami 72
Akkadian goddess 44
A.K. Maitra 145, 147, 149
Akṣamālā 106
Alakshmi 66, 188
Alberuni 189
Alchemists 151
Alla 135
Alpanā 171
Amarī 82
Amarāvatā 75, 76, 78, 80, 156, 199
Amarakośa 149
Amāvasyā 188
Ambika 54, 55, 63, 81, 82, 108, 116, 117, 131 139
Ambuvīci 133
Amlītame 47
Amritā 96
Anaghā 64
Anahıta 42
ānanda 123
Ānandalahrī 98
Anand Swarup Gupta 48
Anantrśayī Viṣṇu 152
Anantavaṛman 113
Anarvā 40
Anāryas 10, 22
Anatolia 17
Anatolian, goddess 19
Ancient Iran 21
Andhakāsura 137, 138
Andhra 73
Androgynous form 104
Anglin 15
Aṇimā 78
Annapurṇa 161

Antari 83
Anthropomorphically 39 (fn)
Antonius 86
Anumati 33, 58, 64
Anunit 82 (fn)
Anuvāka of Taitt 56
Apāla 5
Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra 5, 6 (fn)
Aparājita 74, 199
Apdevis 33
Aphrodite 53
Aphredite 104
Apratihata 74
Apsarās 59, 64, 69, 198
Apṣād inscription 123, 132
Apyā Yoṣā 59
Araḍā 64
Aramati 58
Araṇya (Jungla) 173
Arani 33
Araṇyānī 29 (fn), 33, 48, 83
Arbuda 61
Archetypal Feminine 14
Ardhanārīsvara 4, 86, 98, 104-107, 120, 199
ardhaniṣkranta 113
Ardhanāri 104
Ardhānginī 4
Ardoxo 122
Aristoeratic philosophy 83
Aristotle 2 (fn), 9
Arjuna 91, 93-95, 120
Art 168
Artemis 53, 87
Arthur Avalon 158
Arundhatī Devī 183
Ārya-Māricī 161
Aryaman 40
Aryan 3, 9, 10, 34, 52, 61, 65, 70, 108, 109, 116, 127, 128, 150, 151
Āryan goddess 42
Aryan Society 9
Aryanisation 32
Aryṅised 10
Āryastuva 109
Āryastava 108
Āryāvarta 147
Āśā 64
Asat 51
Asutosh Museum 139
Asia Minor 17 (fn)
Aśoka 168
Aśoka Saṣṭhi 173
Aṣṭādhyāyī 65
Aṣṭaka 194
Aṣṭa Mātṛikās 140
Astarte 69
Aṣṭa Śaktis 140
Asterabad 21
Asṭika 169
Astoreth 61
Astoreth Karnam 61
Asunitī 58
Asuras 128, 127, 137
Aśvaghoṣa 92
Aśvalāyana Grihya Sūtra 6
Aśvins 43, 50, 57, 152, 186, 203
Asvins groomsmen 50
Ātayah 59
Atharvaveda 5, 22, 42, 43, 49-51, 54, 60, 62, 124
Atharvaveda apsarās 59
Atharvaveda Sainhitā 9
Ātman 104
Atri 6
Aurel-Stein 24
Aurora 36
Austria 14
Australia (fn) 150
Autochthonous tribe 80
Avalokiteśvara 163
Avestan 42, 58
Avidyā 138
Axe cult 16
Āyātanas 133
Ayodhya 77, 92, 106, 181
Ayudhaeakra 95
Azes 77, 81
Azilises 77, 78

B

Babylonia 150
Bachante 77
Bādamanagara 133
Bāhu 52
Baleylonian 54 (fn)
Baetylie stones 22
Bali 64
Balkans 17 (fn)
Baksha 52
Baliharaṇa 63, 64

Babylonia 25
Bāna 92
Bāṇabhatta 173
Banaspati Mā 29 (fn)
Bangalore 149
Banyan tree 66
Bariarpur 190
Baron Omar Rolf Ehrenfels 3
Bārati 83
Basarh 59 (fn), 72, 73 (fn), 122, 199
Bāsavīgirl 194
Battle-Axe 122
Bauleo type 23, 75, 76
Baudhayana Dharma Sūtra 6 (fn)
Baudhāyana Grihya Sūtra 64, 174, 202
B.C. Majumdar 114, 118, 164, 186
Benevalent 66
Bengal 173
Bergaignes 33
Besnagar *Yakṣini* 72
Bhadraghata 135
Bhadrakali 64, 82 (fn), 83, 126
Bhga 35, 41
Bhagavatagita 97
Bhāgavata Purāna 137
Bhagavati temple 83
Bhairava 138, 179
Bharata 93, 95, 130
Bhāratī 44, 48, 58, 130, 133
Bharhut 72, 75, 76, 79-81, 83, 84, 88, 128, 145,
  149, 151
Bhārhut medallions 67 (fn)
Bhāhut railing 78
Bhattasali 100, 101, 169
Bhavabhūtī 92
Bhavānī 64, 65, 82 (fn), 116, 128, 198
Bhaviṣya purāna 101, 129, 130, 132, 185
Bhavya 51
Bherunḍa 202
Bhimādevi 179
Bhīmasthāna 178, 179
Bhir Mound 71
Bhiṣma 6
Bhita 24 (fn), 72, 73 (fn), 112, 123, 135
Bhogamandapa 150
Bhṛigu 85 (fn), 121
Bhṛiṅgī 105
Bhūdevi 92, 124, 125, 127
Bhujaṅga 154
Bhūta 51
Birbhum 171, 191
Bloomfield 37
Bloch 59 (fn), 69
Boddha-Gaya 75, 77, 151, 199
Brahadisvara temple 127
Brahma 4, 8, 18, 45-48, 137
Brahmī 130
Brahma chārinī 5
Brahma-Laksmī 122
Brahmānda 90
Brahmīnī 75, 137-139
Brāhmanic fire-altar 55
Brahmaṇism 126
Brahmanical Images 125 (fn)
Brahmayajña 6
Brahmavaivarta Purāna 172
Brahmeśvara Temple 106
Brihatsanihitā 131
Bronze Age 17, 18, 27
Bronze Age Sites 21
Bronze Age World 21
Buddha 99, 100, 162, 165, 198
Buddhism 72, 77 (fn), 128, 134, 159, 199
Buddhist 24, 53, 152
Buddhist pāli jatak stories 65
Bull 19 (fn)
Burney Lillith 59

C

Cakradūjā 202
Cāmunḍā 161
Campā Ṣaṣṭhi 185
Cāmunḍā-Mahisanardinī 140
Cambodia 67 (fn)
Cāmunḍā 139
Canḍikā's 139
Canḍavatī 117
Canḍa 84, 117, 164
Candi 108, 112, 116-118
Candarupa 117
Canāīśatuka 116
Candikā 116
Canḍogrā 117
Canḍa-nāyikā 117
Cape of Comorin 73
Cārudatta 194
Castellion 29
Catus Pitha 180
Cave painting 14

C.C. Das Gupta 68
Ceraking 83
Chaitanya 171
Chakras 71
Chakrāyudha 137, 160
Chalcolithic period 17
Chālukyas 140
Chālukya-Solaṅkī 140
Chandī 71, 180
Chandikā 117
Chanhu daro 24 (fn)
Chaurī 78
Chhath festival 173
Chhinnamasta 161
Chiridaṁb 25
Chitrari 151
Chittagong 177
Chintaharan Chakarvarty 156
Chole 83
Chole temple 127
Cholera 154 (fn)
Christian angels 73
Chulakokā-devatā 72
Cintā Devi 83
Coitus 16
Comte 2 (fn)
Coomaraswamy 69, 73, 75, 77, 79, 83, 87
Corn Mother 29
Cow Goddess 44, 61
C.P. Oldham 152
Cranganore 83
Creative force 14
Culakokā 79, 84
Cunningham 79, 99, 100, 172
Cybete 19, 60
Cyelades 17 (fn)
Cylinder Seal 61
Cyprus 17 (fn)

D

Dabor-kot 24 (fn)
Dacca Museum 169
Daityagarbhā 121
Dakṣa 40-42, 96, 117, 118, 152, 180
Daksinā 36
Daksinā Kālikā 163, 187
Dangal Munna 53
Darasuram 106
Daśaratha 92
Das Gupta 23, 71, 72, 75, 76
Dasyu 10
Dasyu-Dasa 9
Daughter of Heaven 35
Dayak (fn) 150
D.C. Sirkar 178, 180, 183
D.D. Kosambi 37, 59, 80, 194
demigods 152
Demiter 52, 53
Dam-Kina 94
Deva-garbha 121
Devakī 93, 94, 98, 100, 114
Devānam patnīh 57
Devas 105
Devasenā 120
Devī 105, 160, 186
Devī Bhagavata puraṇa 130, 172, 195
Devī Karmantikā 92
Devī Māhātamya 6, 12, 90, 91, 107, 112, 115,117, 126, 131
Devī Sukta 46 (fn), 157
Devi Taviṣī 57
Dhanadā 161
Dharamaraja Ratha 106
Dharmas 98
Dharmasūtras 7-9, 63
Dhataraṭṭha 66
Dhishanā 33, 47, 58
Dhṛiti 51, 120
Dhūmāvatī 161
Digambara 128, 134, 163
Digha Nikāya 67
Dīpa Eaksmī 80
Dīpāvali 121
Diti 33, 41-43, 98, 99
Divine Mother 1, 26, 75
Dove goddess 20
Draupadī 93
Dṛiṣadvatī 45, 65, 94
Dryads 83, 84
Dravidians 151
Durita 56
Duh 51
Durgā *Stotras* 91
Dumuzi 18
Duryodhana 6
Durgā puja 186, 203
Durga Simhavahinī 82
Durgā Ekānamśā 79
Durganiveśa prakaraṇa 74

Durgā 33, 37, 55, 56, 82, 103, 107, 108, 110-112, 114, 117, 118, 138
Dyāvāprithvī 67, 102 (fn)
Dyaus 39, 51, 53, 65
Dyuti 108

E

Early Buddhist Literature 67
Larly Gupta period 12, 19
Early Indus Valley Culture 22
Early Stone Age 14
Early Vedic period 9
Earth Goddess 15, 24, 44, 51, 52, 58, 61, 74
Earth Mother 31
Egyptian mythology 19, 57
Ekāstakā 36
Ekjaṭa 162
Elam 17 (fn), 21
Ellamma 108, 151
Ellora 102, 113, 123, 135, 139
Emushā 126
Enki 53
Eos 36
Fpic-puranic period 9
Epigraphs 10
Erich Neumann 14
Erotic 72
Etymological 41
Eyinnār 82

F

Fabri 106
Fa-hien 154, 155
Father God 74
Father right 2, 3, 32
Fecundity 29
Fergusson 151
Fertility rites 23 (fn)
Festivals 184
Fischel 39
Five-hooded cobra 88
Folk-Goddess 12
Foust-Mother 29
Frazer 13
Funeral pyres 3, 7

G

Gadaj 135
Gaia 52
Gaja Lakpuri 50, 76-79, 120, 122, 123, 199, 201
Gānapatyas 169
Gaṇapatisama Krānta 164
Gandharvī 96
Ganḍa 115
Gandharvas 46, 59, 120
Ganesā 99, 100, 128, 130, 136, 138, 139, 164, 173, 174, 185, 188
Gaṅgādhara 139
Ganguli 53, 113
Gangaī konḍacholapuram 135
Gaṅgā Devata 67, 84
Ganga 47, 65, 67, 74, 115, 119, 135, 147, 148, 199
Garhasthya 190
Gārgī 6
Garuda (fn) 88, 120
Gauda-purāna 126
Gauḍavaho 118
Gauri-puja 203
Gauri Triputā 161
Garuḍa 123
Gauryadi-Soḍaṣa Mātrika 139
Gautama Dharma Sūtra 5
Gāvam mātar 96
Gāy-dām 192, 193, 203
Gāyātrī 128, 129
Ge 52
Geb 25
Gemeter 52
Genii 73
ghora aṇu 115
Ghosā 5
Girā 131
Girijā 108
Gita 40
Giriputri 108
Glotz 22
Gnā 58
Goddess Piṣṭapuri 124
Goddess of Fortune 78
Gopā 51
Gopāla 155
Gopinth Rao 99
Gourhia 20
Greece 7, 36, 42, 52, 53, 150
Greek Coddess Gaja 30
Gṛihya 63
Gṛihya *sutras* 64, 65
Grooke 136

Grunwedel 145
Gugā 154
Gupta Age 107, 120

H

Haleakeśvara Kṣetra 133
Haimavati 55, 116, 118
Hala 31
Halābhiyoga 64
Hampi 127
Hāra 55 (fn), 95, 117
Hāra Gaurī 98
Hāra Parvati 103
Harappa 22, 24, 27, 38, 80, 197
Harappa figurines 70
Harappa people 23
Haravāktrāvalokīni 103
Hari 108, 119
Haripriyā 121
Hāriti 88, 89, 166, 168, 169, 174
Harivamsā 92, 93, 108, 114, 115
Harṣacarita 7
Haryārdha form 106
Hastain 52
Hastinapur 80 (fn)
Hastināda pramodinīm 50
Hatagh dance 68
Hathial 71
Hat-hor 19, 61, 136
Hegel 13
Helen 43
Hellenic iconography 24
Hevajra Tāntra 180
Hellenized 77
Hemādrī 88
Hilleberandt 32, 36, 37, 39
Hiranyākṣa 126, 137
Hippostratos 87
Hiranyaksi 109
Hittite glyptic 59
H. Oldenburga 151
Holi 185, 203
Holik 193
Holy child 22
Homer 51, 53
Homeric Greece 9
Homeric Hera 61
Hopkins 96, 108, 116
Horus 19, 21
Hoyasala art 135
Huen Tsang 81
Human civilization 1
Hunas 10
Hura-Huri 190
Husbandary 2, 17
Huvishka 54
Hymn 5
Hypergamy 3
Hypocrisy 66

I

Iasinī 161
Iḍā 44, 96
Iexicographers 170
Imadpur 140
Indra 35, 37, 46, 48, 53-55, 57, 61, 88, 95, 120, 145
Indraksī 161
Inanna 18, 82 (fn)
Indica 73
Indo-Scythian 79
Indrānī, 33, 49, 56, 57, 64, 65, 88, 128, 137, 138 (fn)
Indus Valley Civilization 31
,, ,, culture 23
,, ,, mother 27
,, ,, period 80, 111, 136, 197, 201
,, ,, people 29 (fn), 30, 31, 38, 60, 70
,, ,, sealing 11 (fn)
Indus seals 84
Indus Valley 11, 17, 20, 23, 25, 67, 95, 173
Indus Valley sites 4, 22, 24
Isis 19, 68
Isis type 23, 24, 75, 99
Ishtar-Nānā 74
Ishtar-type 23, 24, 76, 98 (fn)
Ishtar 61, 68
Iśvara Deva 81
Isvarakṛiṣna 4, 97
Ishvarīpur 145

J

Jagadamba 6
Jagajjanani 6
Jagannath 100, 150
Jaina religions 152
Jainas 198

Jainism 128, 134
Jalandhara 180
Jamadagni 2
James 13, 14
Janayitri 51
Jangali 162, 165, 170
Janmana vasa 61
Janmejaya 152, 169
Japam 150, 168
Jara 174
Jarasandha 166
Jaratkaru 169
Jatakas 11, 67, 79, 84
Javanese 114, 136
Jaya 108, 123
Jatavedasi 108
Jaya-Durga 117
Jayanta 74
Jericho 15
Jessore 145
Jina paravanatha 171
Johanson 58
Jñāna-bhaṇḍa 81
Jñana-yoga 85
J.N. Banerjee 202
Jur-Sital 193
Jvalanti 181
Jyestha 173, 174, 202

K

Kadambari 173
Kaikeyi 6
Kailasa temple 147
Kaivalya 189
Kalaratri 116
Kali 24, 55, 64, 83, 105, 108, 115, 116, 118, 139, 161, 163, 165, 173, 202
Kalidasa 7, 123, 147
Kalika Mata temple 140
Kali-*puja* 203
Kalika-purana 180. 183
Kaliya Naga 145, 153
Kalyana Sundara 102, 200
Kama 129
Kamakhya 161
Kamaksi 123, 131
Kamarupa 183
Kama Sutra 189
Kamala 161
Kamalalaya 77
Kamarupini 166
Kamuki 183
Kanamarselvi 83
Kanauj 172
Kanchi 181
Kankali 81
Kanni 82
Kanya-Kumari 73, 82
Kapali 108
Kapila 108, 165
Kapila patni 174
Katmayoga 85
Karmakandas 4
Karttikeya 136
Kasyapa 152
Katha upanisad 87
Katya yani 111
Kausambi 77, 78
Kausika 115
Kautilya 75
Kautilya's Arthsastra 74, 199
Kena Upanisad 54, 55
Khala yajna 64
Kharod 149
Kishi-no-jim 168
Kokamukha 109
Korea 168
Korravai 82
Kosam 198
Kovalam 83
Krishna 8, 92, 93, 95, 99, 101, 114, 115, 122, 153, 164, 192
Krisnapingala 108
Krisna chhavisma 108
Ksama 120
Ksudra-koka 84
Kubera 120 123,
Kumara Sambhava 107, 116
Kumari-puja 203
Kumbha 69
Kundalas 95
Kuninda coins 79
Kunindas 79
Kurma-purana 138
Kusanas 10, 12, 90, 91, 104, 145
Kusana age 86
Kusana coins 74, 199
Kusana period 76, 89, 112, 168, 169
Kuvera 167, 169

L

Lady of Wild Creatures 20
Lighima 78
Lahunjodaro 24
Lakhiya 24
Lakṣmana 93, 95
Lakshmi 33, 37, 50, 64, 66, 73, 77-82, 85, 92-95, 101, 108, 118, 120, 121, 128-130, 174, 188, 198
Lakṣmi puja 121
Laksmyavasa 90
Lalita Kanta 180
Lalitasahasranama 137
Lalitavistara 78
Lanka 83
Latin Goddess 49
Later vedic people 37
Lauriya-Nandaṇgarh 11, 69, 72, 78, 198
Lava 93
Levirate 7
Licchhavis 59
Lichhavis 153
Linga 22, 23, 86, 101, 104-106, 132, 133, 157, 160
Linga purana 106, 115, 126, 174
Literary sources 12
Lokadharini 51
Lopamudra 5
Lord Budha 67, 125, 126
Lord Siva 22
Lotus buds 72
Lotus pedestal 72
Lucina 49
Lucna 49
Lunar Goddess 49
Lunar myth 32

M

Maau 173
Macdonell 74
Mackay 80
Madhyama Carita 115
Mudhyamikas 202
Madhyamika vac 46
Madhu 95
Magha 203
Magho 197
Mahabharata 166, 178, 202
Mahadeva 164
Mahabhima 108
Mahadurga 161
Mahakoka 84
Mahamaya 114
Mahamayuri 79
Mahapralaya 158
Mahasukha 159
Mahavastu 78
Mahavira 189
Maheśvari 138
Mahi 44
Mahisa 117
Mahisasura 111, 200
Makara 67, 101
Malaimghal Tirumurugarruppadai 82
Malevolent 66
Mamalla puram 149
Manasa 202
Manava Grihya Sutra 198
Manchamma 170
Manjusri 128
Mantham 173
Mantra 75
Matriarchy 3
Manu 6
Marshall 74, 76
Mata 5
Matangi 151, 161
Matarah 140
Mathura 75, 81
Mathura terracotta 76
Matrikas 98
Matriganas 139
Matsya 160
Maues 77
Mauryan 75
Mauryan finds 12
Maurya-Kuṣana Period 77
Mauryan Period 74
Maya 77, 99
Maya Devi 73
Mayavai 13
Mahabharata 82
Mauryan period 73
Medha 120
Megasthenses 73
Meru 108
Mesopotamian 73

Mithuna figures 86
Mohinjodaro seal 111
Moharatri 110
Mother cult 74
Mother Goddess 1, 21, 65, 68, 74-76, 82, 84-86, 99, 108, 136, 177, 178, 184, 194
Mother Goddess cult 185
Mother hood 4
Mother of the vedas 46
Mother-right 1
Mṛiḍani 65
Mrig 185
Muir 42, 117
Mukunda 123
Mundaka upanisad 136

N

Naga 10, 30, 88, 145, 153
Nagas 80, 150, 198, 201
Nagarajaputri 108
Naga Kanya 108
Naga origin 80
Naga-panchami 150, 169, 203
Nagar 112
Nagaraja Chakravako 88
Nagini 88, 145, 151
Nalgora 168, 169
Naraka 94
Narsimhi 139
Narayana 90, 114, 121
Narayani 148, 159, 165
Nature powers 58
Navagraha 100
Neith 19
Neolithic Age 15
Neolithic Cultures 15
Neolithic Goddess 16
Nepalese 136
Neumann 98
Nevasa 68
Nile 17
Nilesarasvati 161
Nilotpala 95
Nilopala 99
Nin-khursay 18
Nin-makh 18
Nin-tu 18
Niradhbandhu Sanyal 100
Nirriti 33, 43, 56, 138, 174
Nisumbha 114, 115, 139
Nityas 161
Nivavari 5
Niyoga 7
Nik. Bhattasali 169
N.K. Bhattasali 170
Nomadic Abhira Shepherds 117
Non-Aryan 44, 52, 53, 61, 64, 65, 80
Non-vedic 3
Nrisimha 137
Nudity 21, 68
Nut 42, 54
Nupura 102
Nyagrodha-primaṇḍala 79
Nude Mother 74

O

Oesha 82
Odiyana 180
Ogress 166
Oise 16
Oldham 152
Oldenberg 33, 39
Omme 82
Ommo 81
Omnipotence 13
Oppert 23
Orion 185
Orissa 112, 113
Orraimulaicci 83
Oshadhis 96
Oxyroynehus papyrus 85

P

Padma 123
Padma purana 129, 132
Padmavasini 77
Palaeolithic 2
Palm tree 72
Pandaea 73
Pandavas 92
Palai 82
Pala period 124
Pala-Sena period 148
Pali 67
Pallava 149
Palusha 179
Pancha-chauda 85

Panchala phalyunimitra 87
Panchandana Aja 28
Pancika 89
Pondala of Megasthenes 74
Pandavas 6
Pandya 73
Panigrahana 102
Panini 65
Pantaleon 79, 87
Para-Brahma 98
Paramara King Bhoja 134
Parameś vara 106
Parama gatih 148
Parasurama 2
Pathari 99
Parthian Goddess 29
Parvati 81, 82, 200
Parvatakanya 82
Pasupati 22
Paternity 1
Payas 51
Payne 91
Periano-ghundai 24
Persia 16
Persians 10
Phallic-worshippers 22
Phantastical image 104
Pharaoh 19
Phrygia 17
Piggot 24
Pipa 154
Pista-Burika 124
Pitari 83
Plato 16
Plaque 78
Post-Indus 11
Post-Indus Valley 68
Post-Kusana 92
Post-Sunga 75
Periplus 82
Perso-Hellenistic 75
Post-vedic 42
Post-vedic mythology 41
Pradhana 106
Pradhanika Rahasya 131, 132
Prajapati 129
Prajapati (Brahmana) 129
Pṛakriti 4, 97, 124
Prasasti 48
Pravarasena I 141
Pre-Aryan 32, 52, 80
Pregnant woman 23
Pre-historic 4, 15, 68
Pre-Mauryan 11, 68
Pre-vedic 52
Primitive men 27
Prithu 125
Prithvi 33, 76, 98
Protohistoric period 16
Puja 186
Puskhalavati 79
Puskara 128
Puranas 82, 128, 129
Purusa 97
Purusa Sukta 97
Purva-phalyuni 88
Pusan 145
Pushan 28
Puskara 154

R

Radha 130
Rajagriha 166, 167
Rajalila 134
Rajasa 124
Rajashahi Museum 107
Raksasi 166
Raktabija 116
Ralaketu 71
Rama 97
Ramcuyana 91
Ram Krishna 3
Ravana 97, 186
Revati 94
Rama 94
Revati *graha* 94
Religio-philosophical 3
Renon 33
Rigveda 69, 145, 146, 157, 174
Rigvedic 97
Rigveda Dyaus pitar 53
Rigvedic Aditi 41
Rigvedic literature 33
Rigvedic period 128
Risis 46
Ring-stones 22
Rupini 114
Risi Kapila 97
River goddess 45

Rodasi 33, 56
Rohini 37, 96
Rome 8, 36
Rongreau 9
R.P. Chanda 164
Rudra 64, 131, 145, 198
Rudras 40
Rudrani 57, 64, 65, 100, 198
Rudrapatni 108
Rudra-Siva 74
Rudrayamala 74

S

Sadyojata 200
Sajosa 52
Sakambhari 28
Sakta doctrine 104
Sakta tirthas 203
Sakti 73, 74, 86, 88
Sakuntala 7
Samari 82
Sambhu 110
Samhitas 49, 121
Samskara 9
Sanchi 77
Sankara 100
Sankaracarya 7
Santi parva 120
Sapta-Vidha-Vani 136
Sapta-Sindhavah 136
Sarasvata-Tirtha 133, 185
Sarasvati 7, 33, 37, 45, 49, 56, 58, 63, 65, 73, 81, 82, 92, 108, 124, 128, 135, 148, 185
Sarddha Devi 134
Sarvani 116
Satapatha Brahmana 44, 47, 126
Sati 3, 118
Savitri 41
Sayana 49
Semitis 53
Shasthi 64
Shasthi—Kalpa 64
Sitapaddi Karam 83
Sirima 78
Sisnadevah 10, 22
Sita 33, 48. 49, 64, 74, 93, 95, 97, 115
Sita-Rama 103
Sitayajna 49, 64
Siva 23, 33, 54, 57, 74, 84, 92, 97, 103, 105, 107, 110, 115, 116, 131-33, 137, 138, 147, 148, 158, 160, 164, 174, 200
Siva *lilas* 102
Siva *Liṅgas* 22, 105
Siva Mahapurana 85, 105, 110
Siva-parvati 102, 103
Siva-Sakti 200
Sodalakṣmi 161
Sodasa 77
Sphuliṅigini 55
Sravana 169
Sri 48, 78, 79
Sri-Laksmi 90
Sridasa 80
Srikirti 108
Sri Laksmi 76, 79, 87, 118, 120, 201
Srimad Bhagavat 151
Sri Madira 74
Srimat 78
Sripati 121
Srutadevi 134
Subhadra 96
Sudarsana 84
Sulabha 6
Suti 82
Sulohita 55
Sumerican goddess 82
Sumero-Babylonian 74
Sunga 75, 201
Sunrita Sri 33
Sunyata 201
Surabhi 96
Surya 33
Suryagarbha 121
Sutras 11, 65, 75
Svasti 33

T

Tajaji 154
Talavakara Upanisad 55
Taittiriya Āranyaka 73, 55
Taittiriya Brahmana 46, 56
Tamnuz 59
Tandava 106
Tantrasura 148
Tantric 116
Tantric form 202
Tantric literature 12

Tantric Sadhana 137
Tantric trait 139
Tanu 52
Tapas 103
Tara 162
Tara-Kali 202
Taranatha 155
Taxila 168
Thajavur 106
Therimorphic 29
Tibetan 136
Tigowa 149
Tila 81
Tilak 36
Trimurti 194
Tripura 161
Traṇscendental order]13
Trisula 113
Tulsi 95
Turanian Stock 151
Turkistan 168
Tvarita 161
Tvastri 53

U

Udayagiri caves 71, 126, 140
Ugra-Candika 117
Ujjain 77
Uma 81, 87, 103, 131
Uma-Mahesvara 102, 103
Ummi 54
Ummu 54
Umapati 54
Universal facundity 22
Upanayana 9
Upanisadas 83
Upper palaeolithic 15, 17
Urjani 50
Urvarapati
Usas 33, 93, 95, 161
Usha 65
Utpala 139
Uttanpad 42
Uttara-Carita 115
Uttara-phalgani 88

V

Vāc 45, 48
Vāḍavā prātitheyī 6
Vagālā 161
Vaisāli 167
Vaiṣnava deities 124
Vaiṣnavī 121
Vaiśya 195
Vāmana purāṇa 111
Varāha Purāna 124, 138
Varavarninī 108
Varuna 40
Varunānī 33, 56-58, 165
Varutrī 58
Vāsudeva 123
Vāsukī 30, 64
Vasus 40
Vāyu purāṇa 90
Viṣnu purana 90
Vedic 65
Vedic affiliation 22
Vedic Āryans 22
Vedic Dawn 40
Vedic Goddess 24 (fn)
Vedic India 9
Vedic literature 62, 96
Vedic mythology 60
Vedic pantheon 39
Vedic period 28, 35
Vedic philosophy 27
Vedīc Scholars 33
Vedic Seers 44
Venuses 14, 15
Venus of Lespunges 15
Vidisha 126
Vindhyavāsī-Durga 117
Virāṭa puruṣa 97
Virgin Goddess 18
Virūpāksī 109
Viṣnu 41, 50, 57, 90-93, 105, 106, 117, 118, 121-124, 126, 128, 131, 132, 137, 153, 159, 174
Viśṇupaṭṭas 71, 198
Viṣṇu purāṇa 98, 119, 121, 125
Varāha purāna 124

W

Wanda 111
Weber 37
West-Asia-Sumer 21
West Asiatic regions 21
Western Chālukyan style 135

Western Civilizations 11
Western Delta 19
Wijasan 134
Wilson 125
W.K. Bhaattasali 100
Wallis 39
Worship 30
Wantonness 66
Water-mymphs 59

Y

Yādava 138
Yajuraveda 41, 44 (fn), 62, 97
Yakṣa 146, 165, 198
Yakṣa King 169
Yakṣarāja 169
Yakṣas 64
Yakśa-Yakṣinī 199
Yaksī 78
Yakṣinī 72, 79, 84, 85, 146
Yakṣini Aśvamukhī 87
Yama 7
Yamunā 65, 135, 145, 147, 148, 150, 153, 201
Yantras 74, 160
Yaśodā 100, 103, 114
Yatkinchit 159
Yātu-dhāna 62
Yaudheya Coin 120
Yema 137
Yogamāyā 95
Yoganidrā 114
Yogeśvarī 138 (fn)
Yoni 22, 23, 31, 51, 75, 76, 101, 104, 106, 160, 197
Yoni-paṭṭa 86
Yuan Chuang 129, 154, 163, 167, 168
Yuddhakāṇḍa 116
Yudhiṣṭhira 132

Z

Zeus 50 (fn), 61
Zimmer 84, 88
Zodaic Signs 149

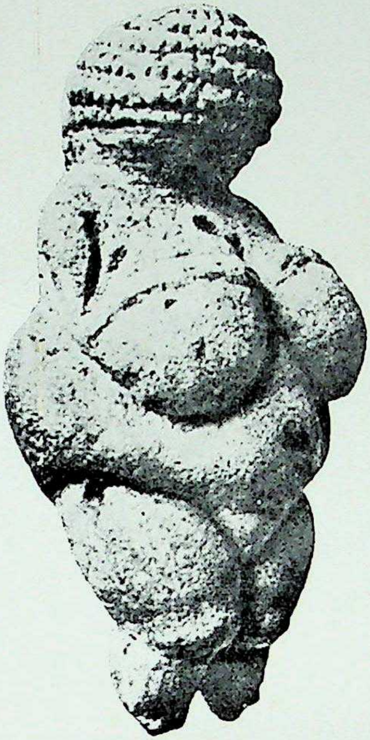


Fig. 1. Venus of wittendrof, Lime stone, Austria, Palaeolithic Period.

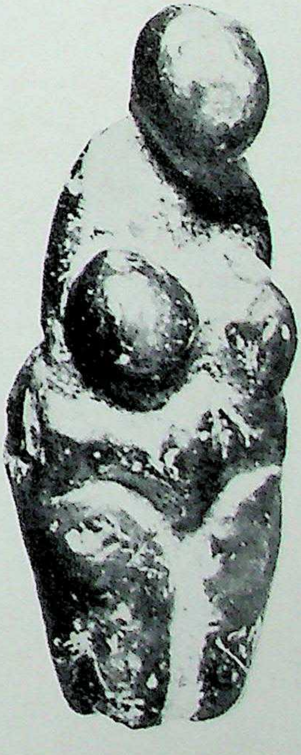


Fig. 2. Venus of Menton, Soapstone, Austria, Palaeolithic Period.

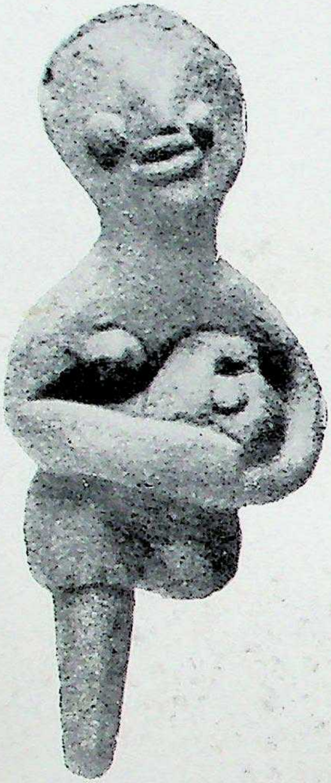


Fig. 4. Mother and child, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

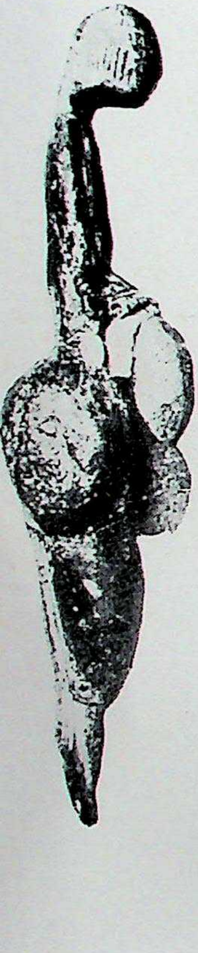


Fig. 3. Venus of Lespugne, Ivory, France, Palaeolithic Period.

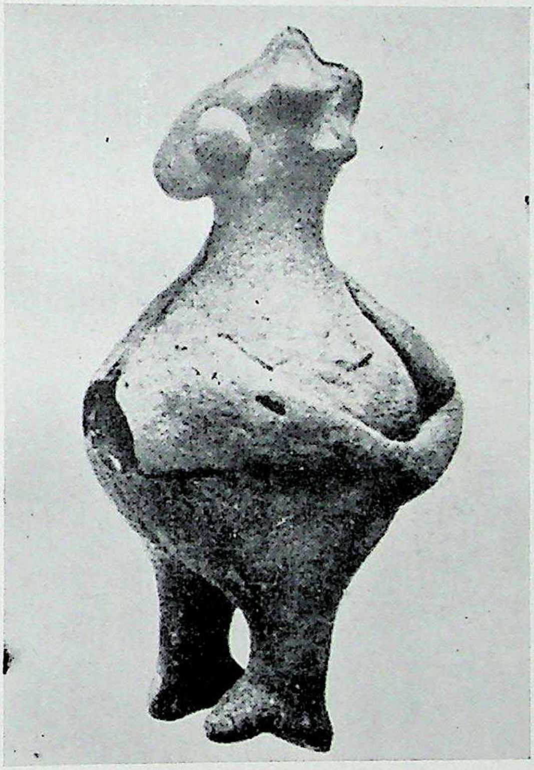


Fig. 5. Pregnant Woman, Indus valley, *c*. 3rd milleniun B.C.

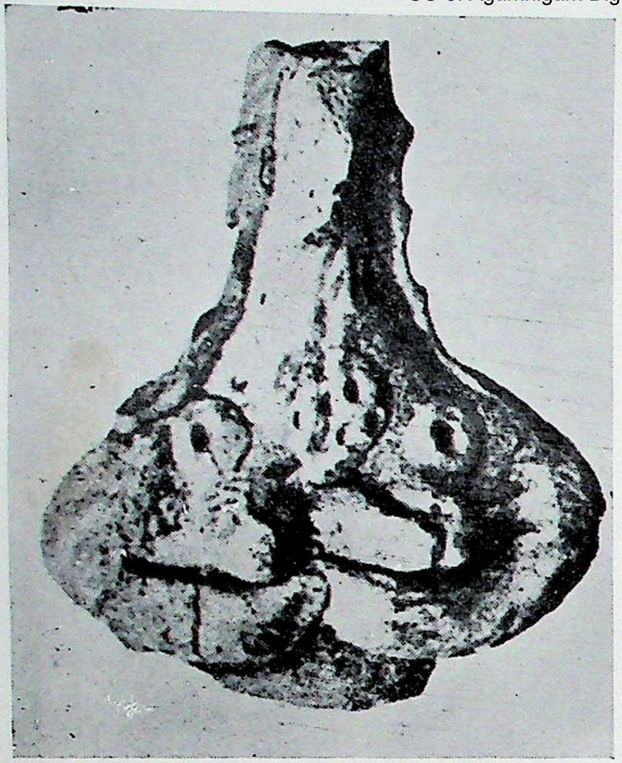


Fig. 6. Earth Goddess, Kulli.

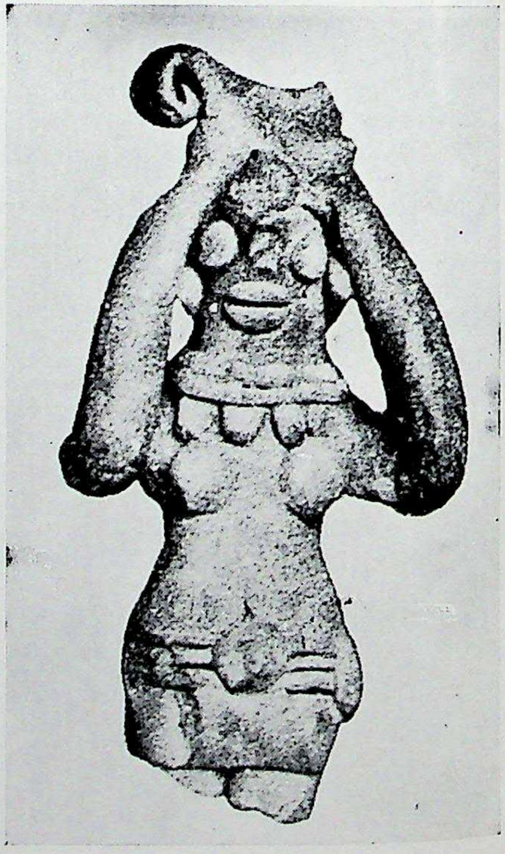


Fig. 7. Earth goddess, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

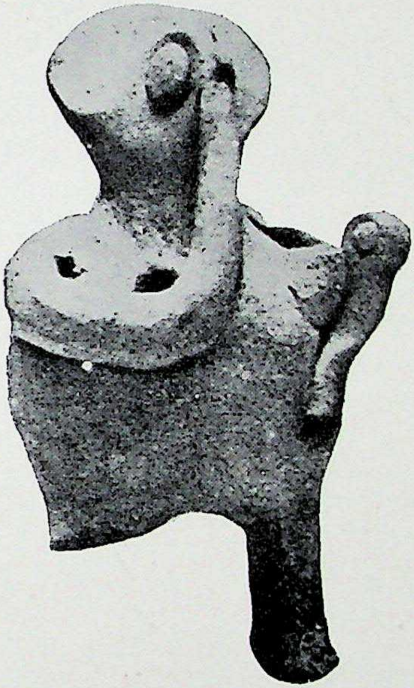


Fig. 8. Mother holding baby and left breast, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

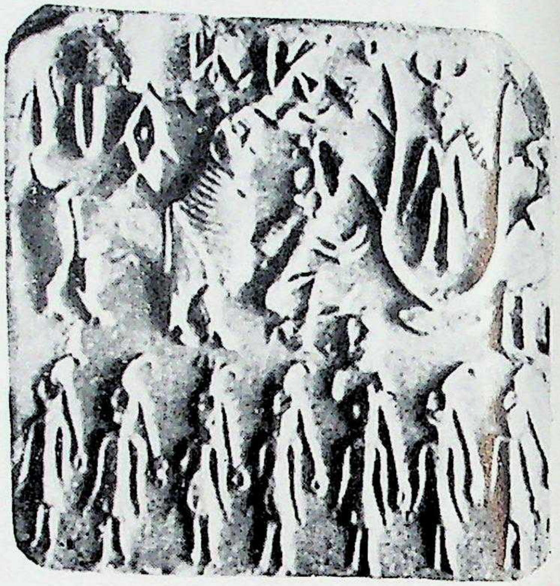


Fig. 10. Tree Goddess between the branches of the tree, Indus valley seal, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

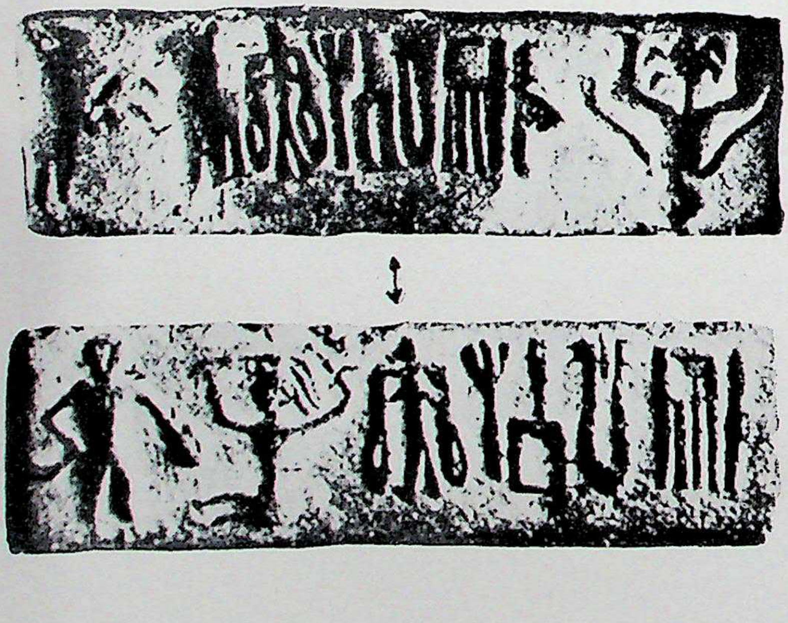


Fig. 9. Mother goddess, Indus valley, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

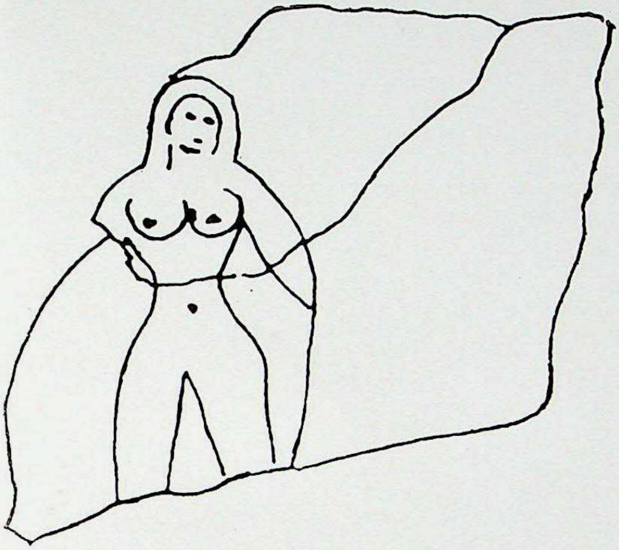


Fig. 12. Naked Goddess, Navadatoli.

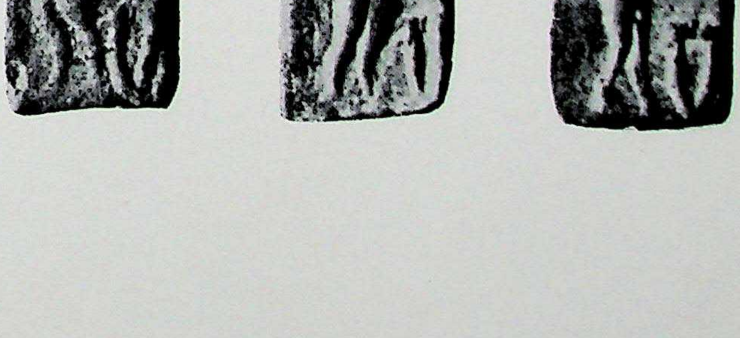


Fig. 11. Three Bovine female figure, Indus valley, Harappa, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

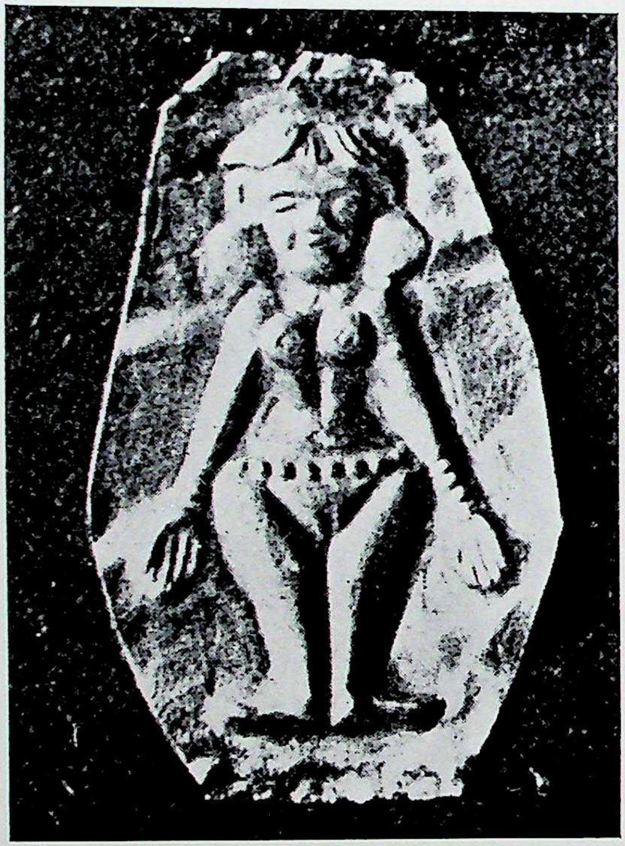


Fig. 14. Mother goddess on gold plaque, Lauriya Nandangarh.

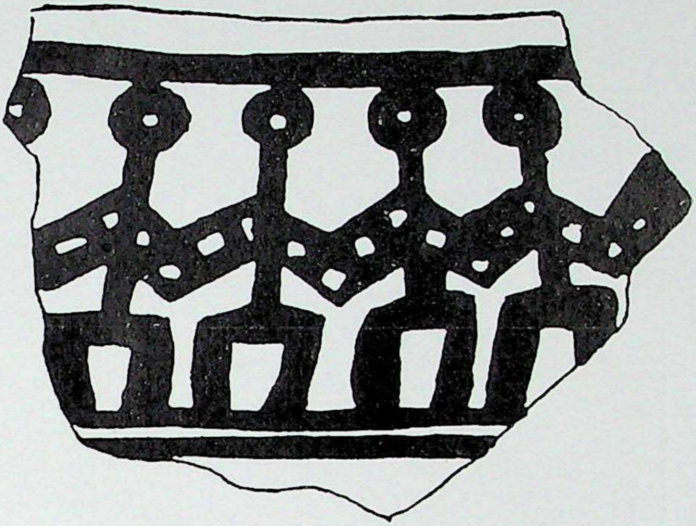


Fig. 13. Girls in dancing posture, Nandatoli.

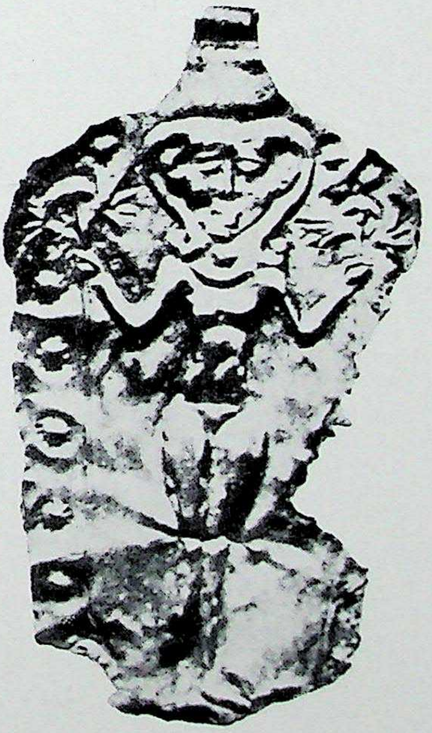


Fig. 15. Astarte gold plaque, Sejna, *c.* 13th Century B.C.

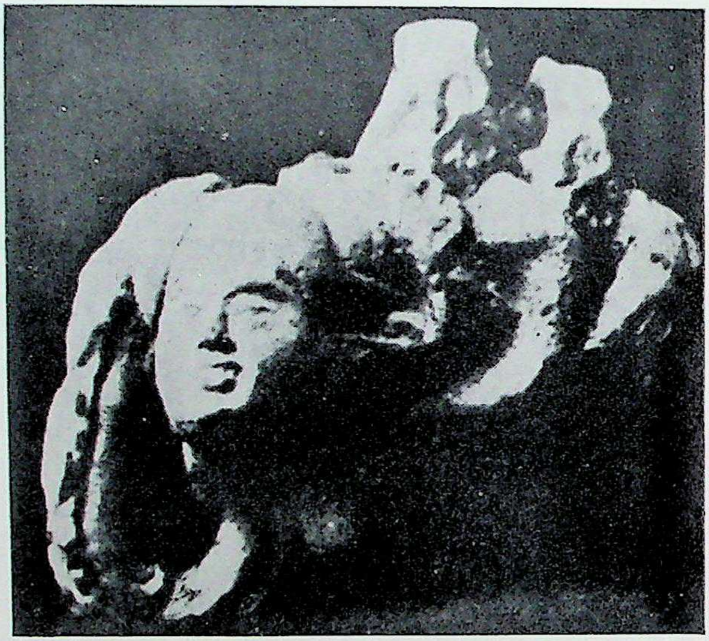


Fig. 16. Serpent Goddess, Bulandibagh, *c*. 3rd Century B.C.

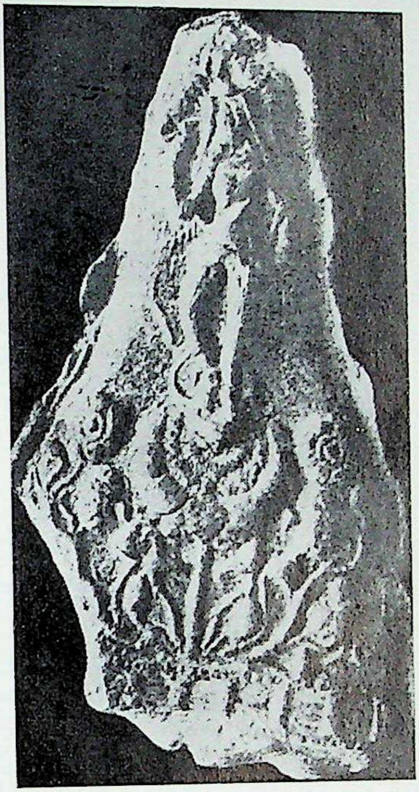


Fig. 18. Laxsmi, Terracotta plaque, Kausambi.

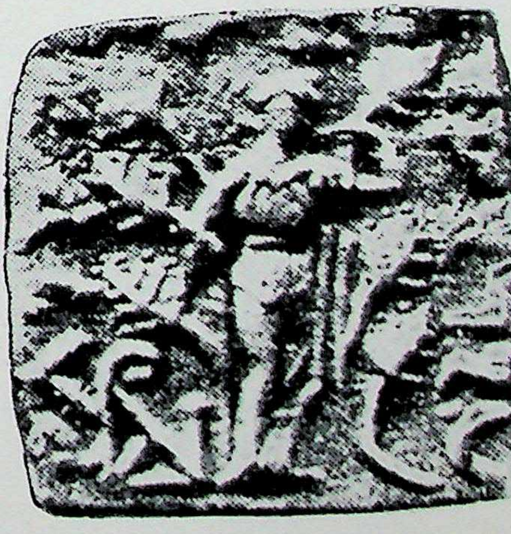


Fig. 17. Laxsmi, coins of Maues.

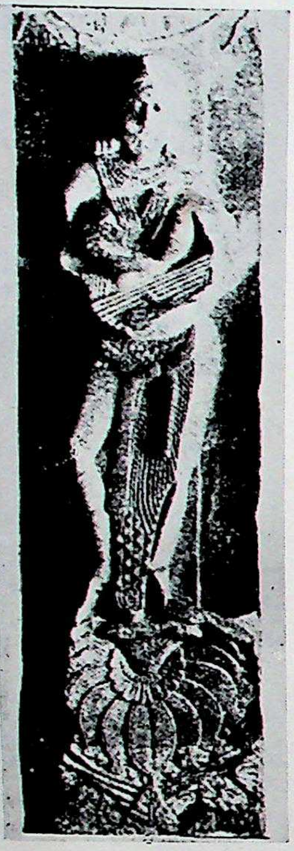


Fig. 20. Saraswati, Bharhut, *c.* 2nd Century B.C.

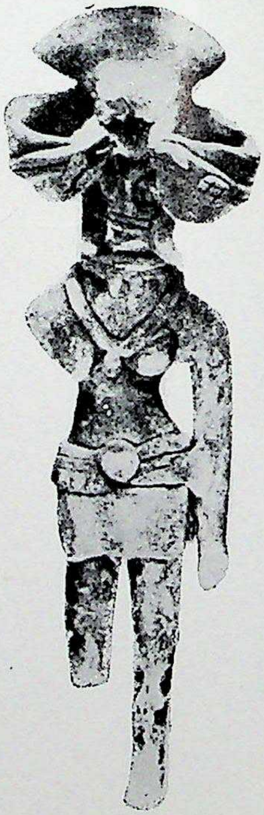


Fig. 19. Dipa Laxsmi, Indus valley, Mohanjodaro, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

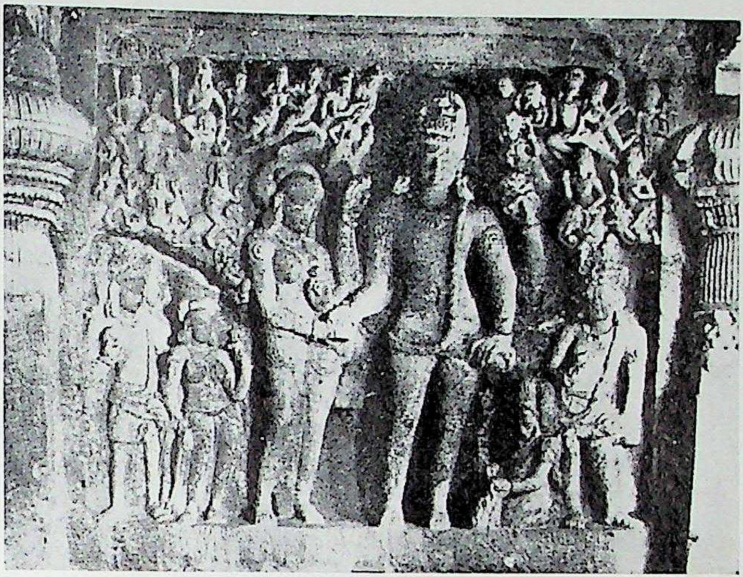


Fig. 21. Kalyanasundra, Ellora, Rastrakutaj *c.* 8th Century A.D.

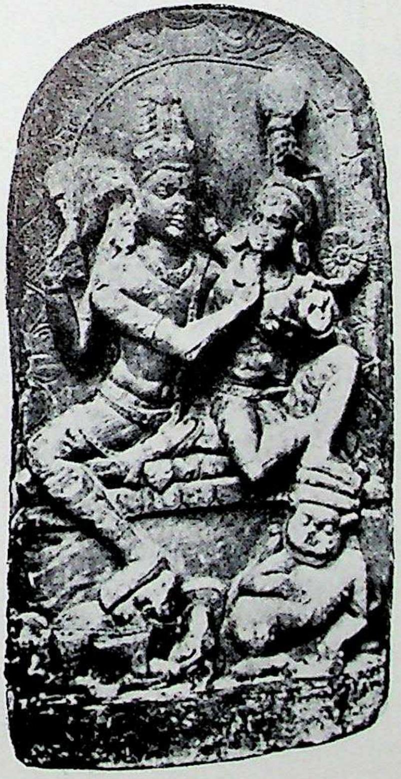


Fig. 22. Uma Maheswara, Pala, Bihar, *c.* 10th Century A.D.

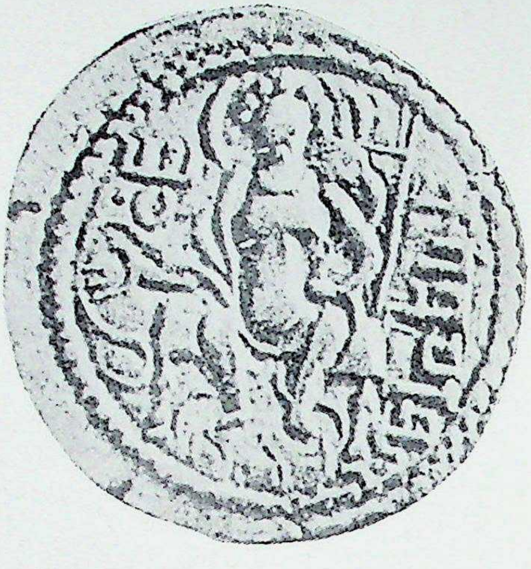


Fig. 26. Laxsmi on the coins of Samudra Gupta.

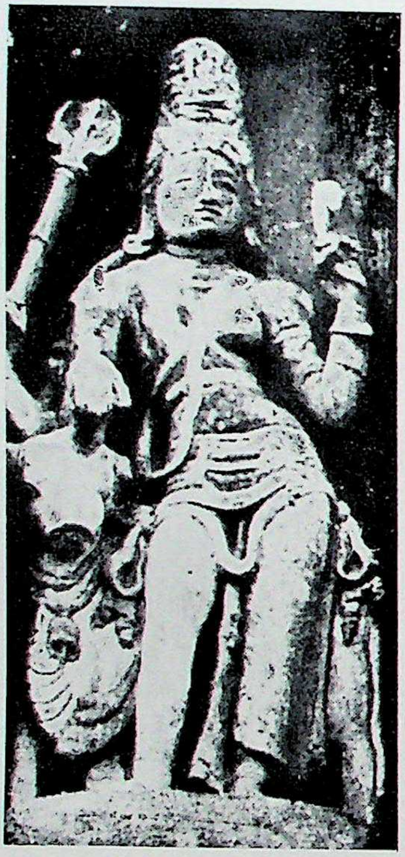


Fig. 23. Ardhanariswara, Dasasuram, Chole, *c.* 12th Century A.D.

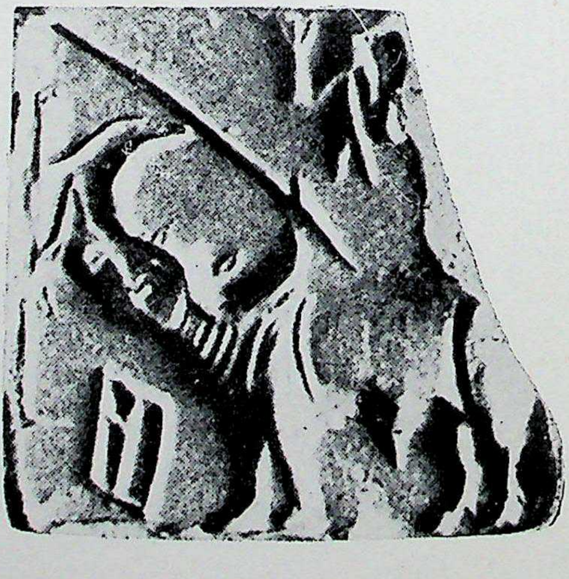


Fig. 24. Buffalo being killed by a spear, Indus valley seal, *c*, 3rd milleniun B.C.

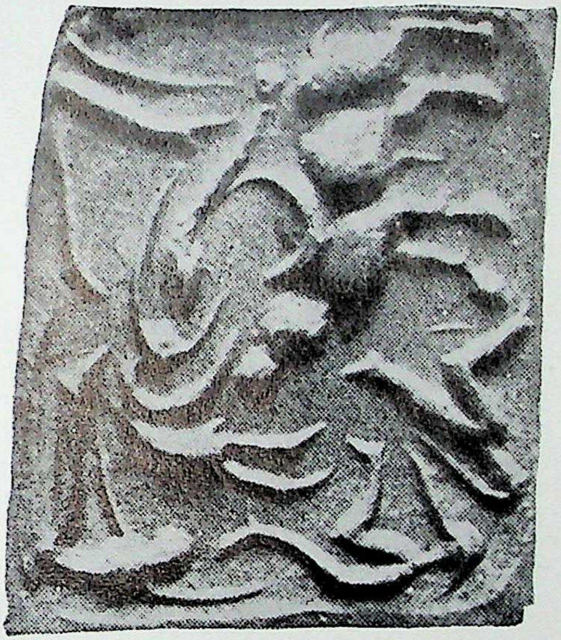


Fig. 25. Buffalo attacking a number of people, Mohanjodaro, seal Indus valley people, *c.* 3rd milleniun B.C.

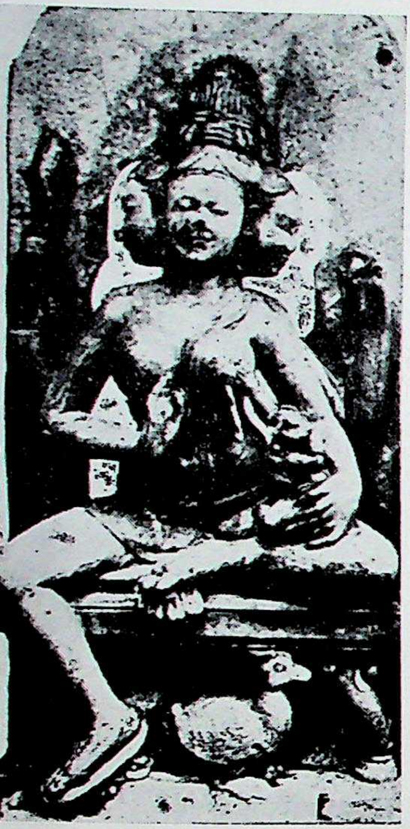


Fig. 27. Brahmani, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.

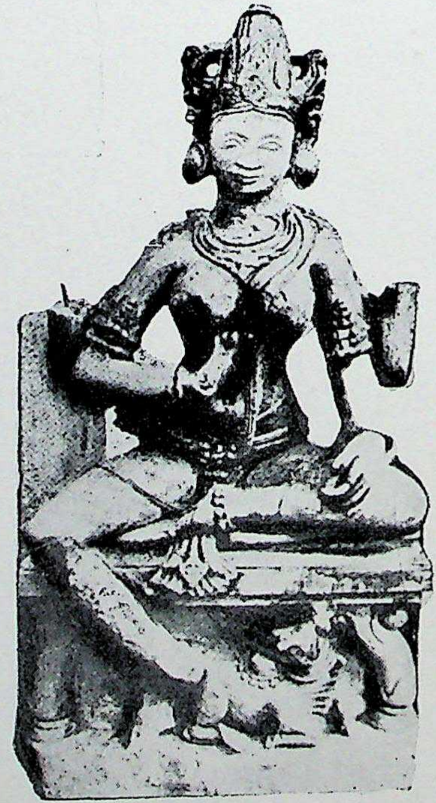


Fig. 28. Maheswari, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.

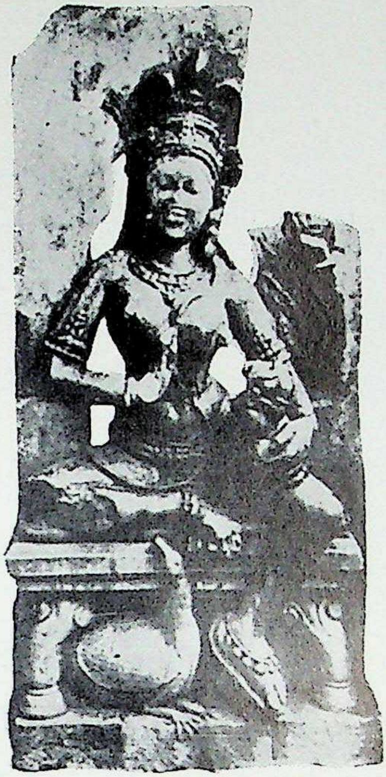


Fig. 29. Kaumari, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c*. 12 Century A.D.

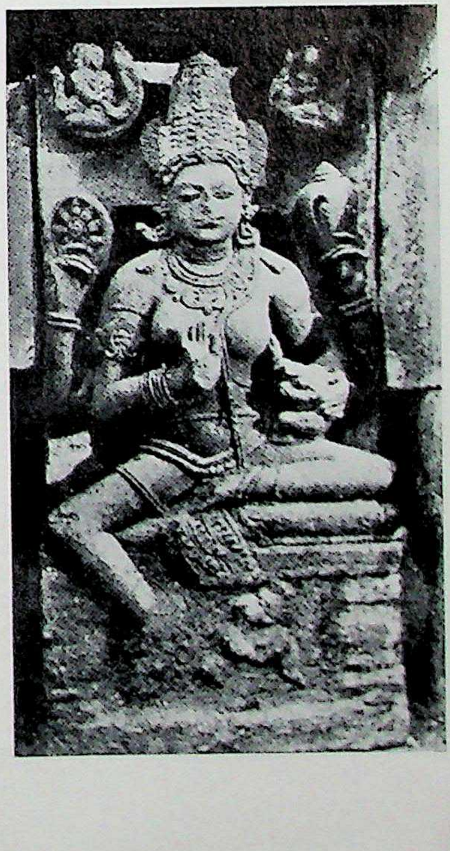


Fig. 30. Vaisnavi, Eastern Ganga, Khiching, *c*. 13th Century A.D.

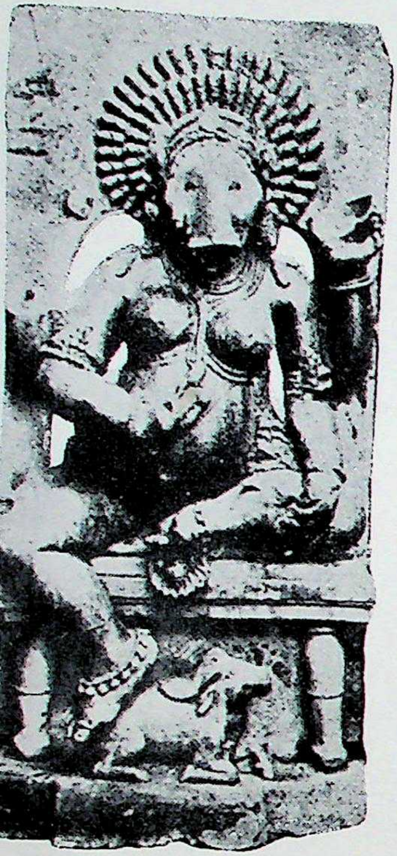


Fig. 31. Varahi, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.

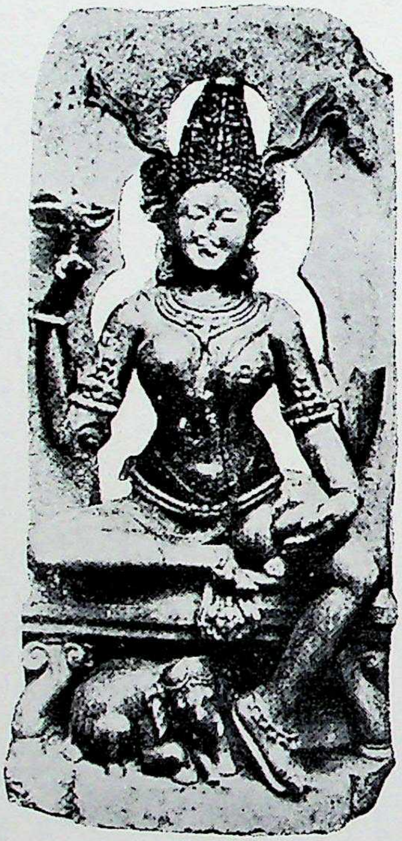


Fig. 32. Indrani, Eastern Ganga, Puri, *c.* 12th Century A.D.

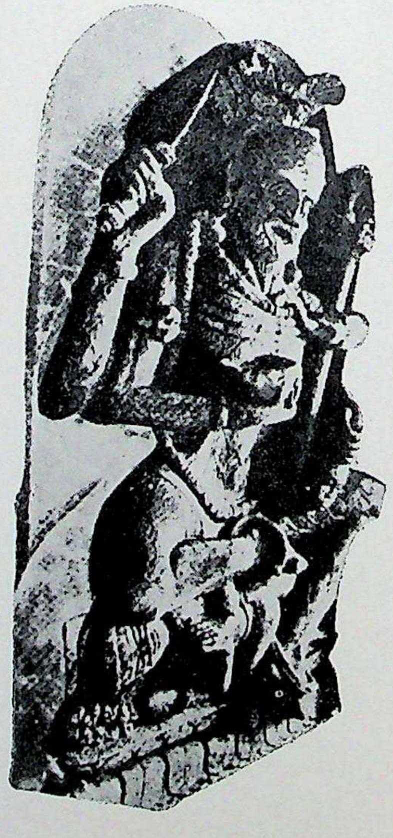


Fig. 33. Chamundi, Eastern Ganga, Jaipur, *c.* 12th Century A.D.

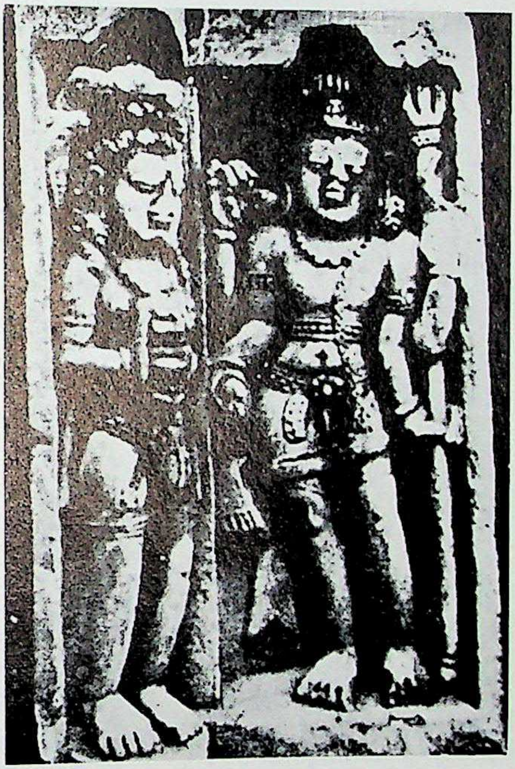


Fig. 34. Naga, Sirishasa temple, *c.* 8th-9th Century A.D.

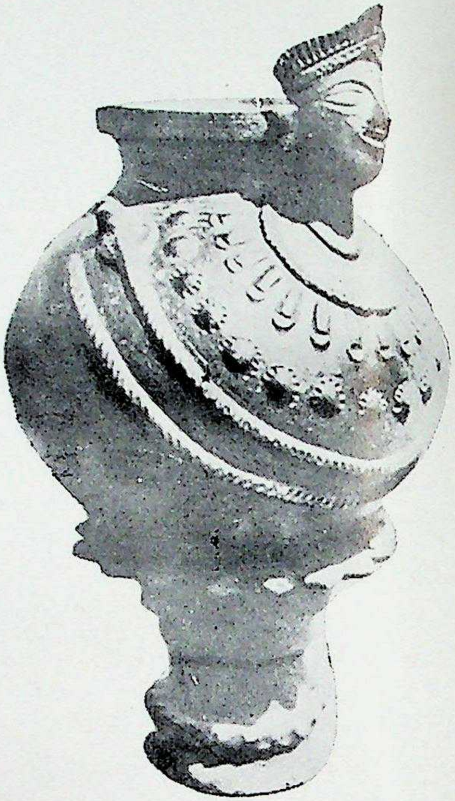


Fig. 37. Manasa, Rihia.

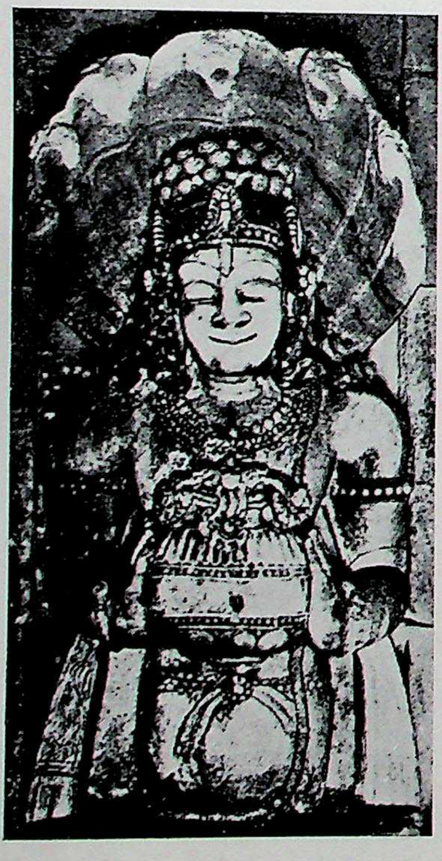


Fig. 35. Naga, Pala, *c.* 11th-12th Century A.D.

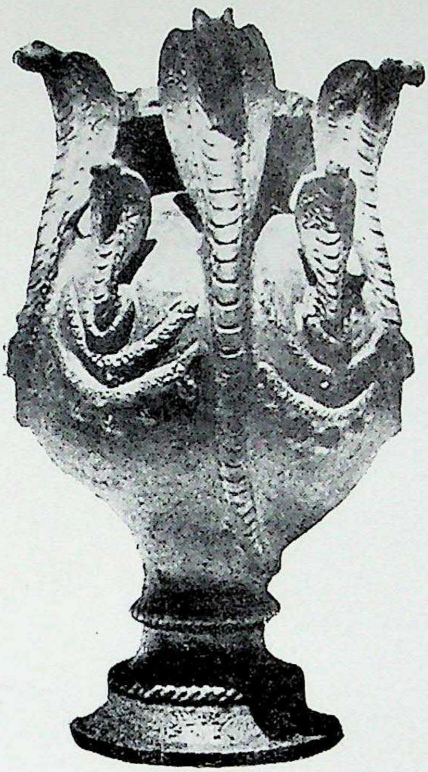


Fig. 38. Manasa, A terracotta.

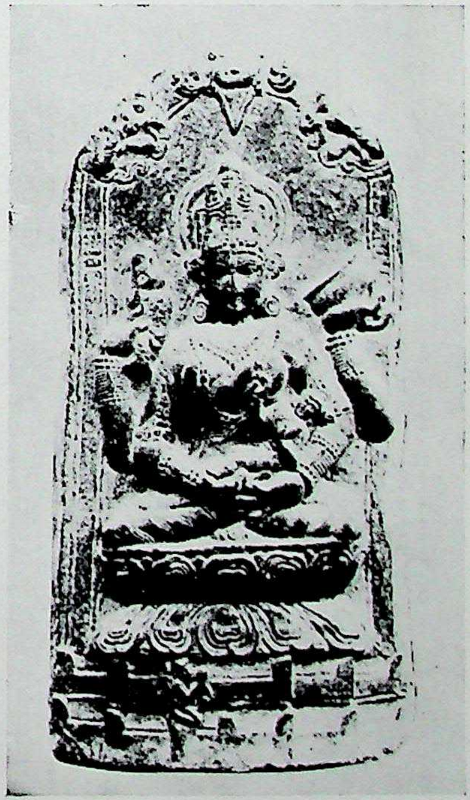


Fig. 36. Hariti, Pala, *c.* 11th-12th Century A.D.

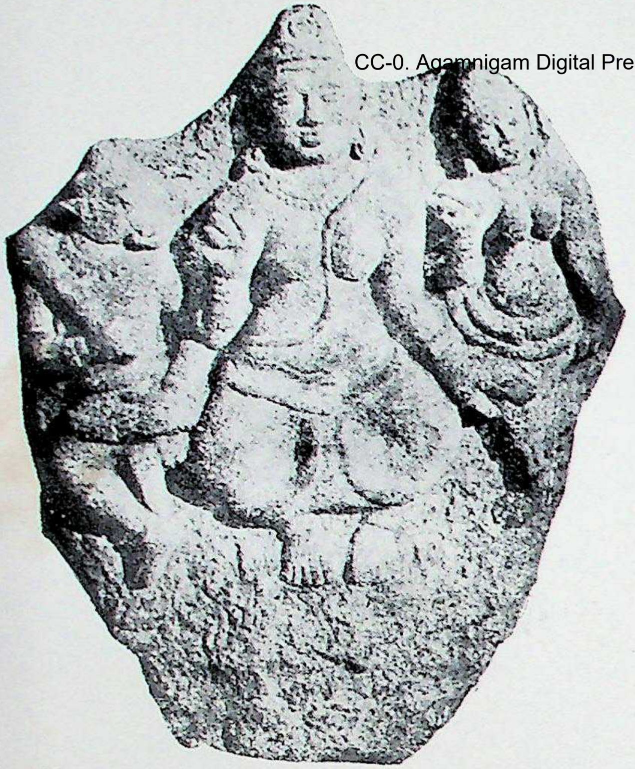


Fig. 40. Jyestha, Pallava, *c.* 8th-9th Century A.D.

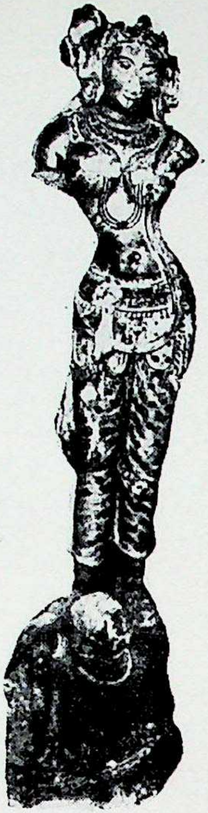


Fig. 41. Ganga, Rajshahi, Pala, *c.* 11th-12th Century A.D.

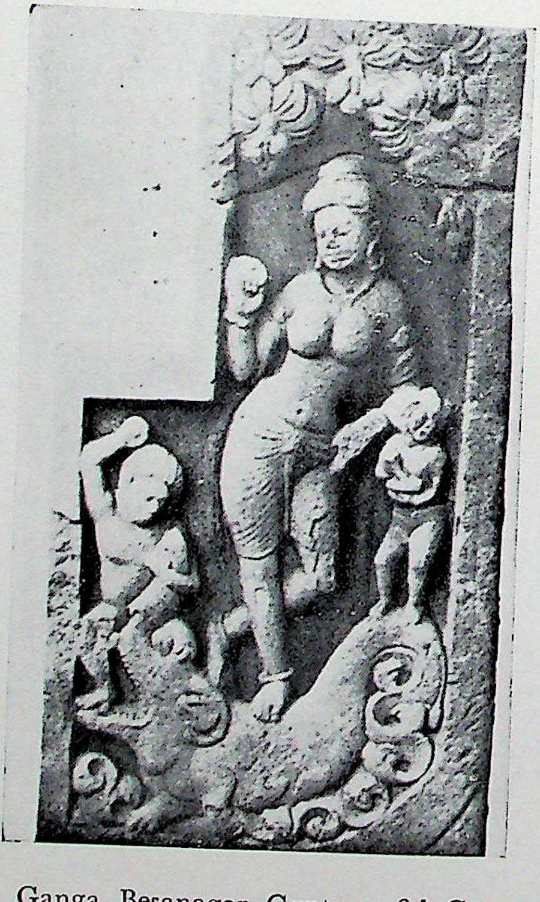


Fig. 39. Ganga, Besanagar, Gupta, *c.* 6th Century A.D.

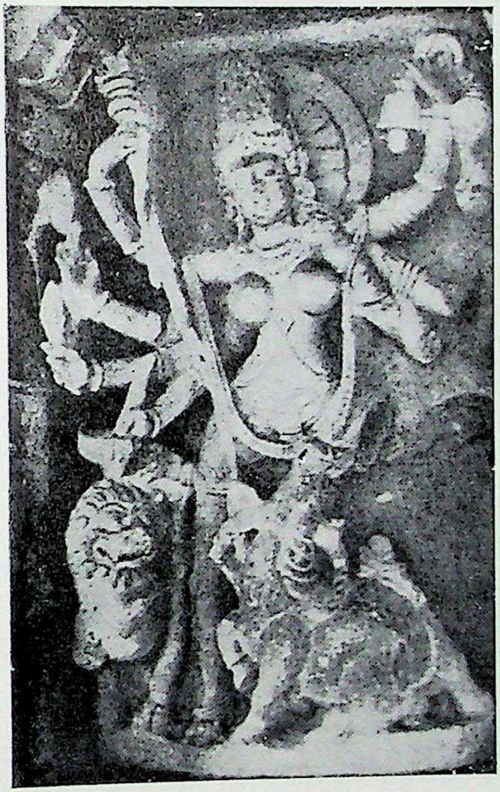


Fig. 42. Mahisamardini, Aihole, *c*. 7th Century A.D.

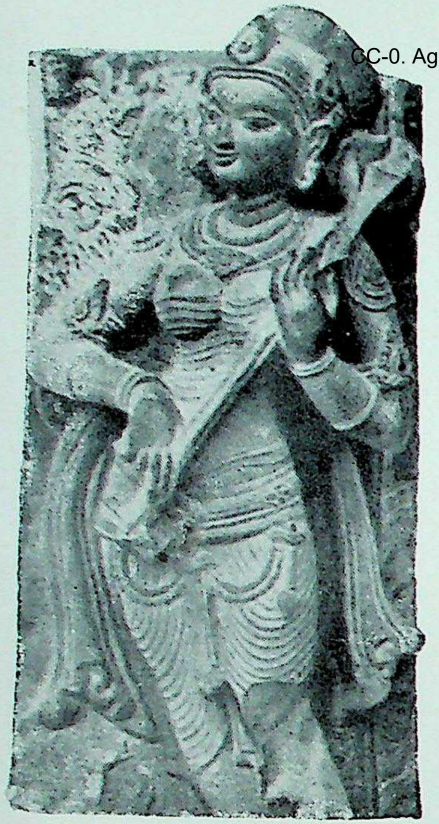


Fig. 44. Saraswati, Pala, Asutosh Museum, *c.* 11th Century A.D.

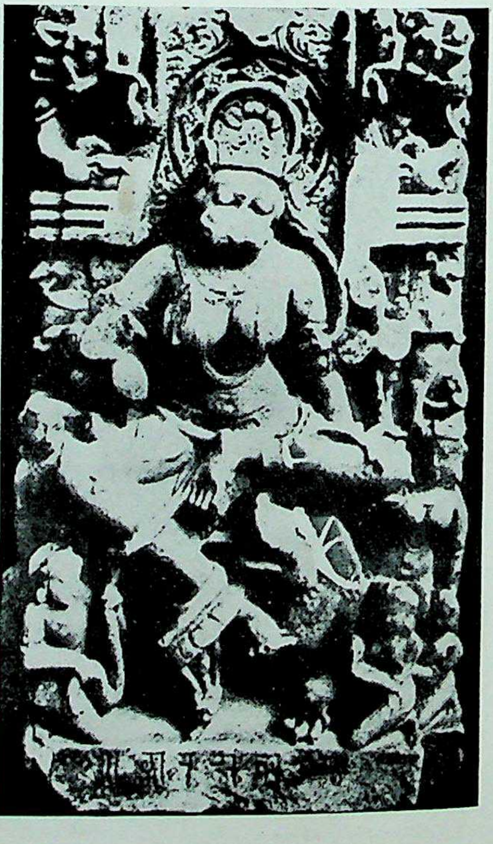


Fig. 43. Narsimhi, Satna *c.* 10th Century A.D.

Agam Kala Prakashan Delhi